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FISHERS OF BOYS

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FISHERS OF BOYS

WILLIAM McCORMICK

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FISHERS OF BOYS

BY

WILLIAM McCORMICK

AUTHOR OF "THE BOY AND HIS CLUBS"

HODDER & STOUGHTON
NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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TO THE

Men of Olivet

WHO USED TO BE

OLIVET BOYS

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FOREWORD

WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH YOUR TOWN'S BOYS? No more important question confronts the world to-day. Upon the answer depends largely the welfare of humanity for several generations to come.

That Boys are a most valuable asset is recognized by real leaders in all the activities of life.

The victories of war have been won by boys.

The success of our educational institutions is measured by the achievements of the boys.

Our business interests and commercial standing depend much upon the brain and brawn of our boys.

In all walks of life we use to the limit our boy material to attain our ends in the fields of war, business, education, and all selfish and secular pursuits.

Time, thought and money are expended

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without stint to win the interest and support of the boys in all classes of these fields of activity.

Pool rooms, picture shows, club-houses, cigarette, cigar and tobacco manufacturers, saloon keepers and the brewers and distillers back of them, all keenly appreciate the value of boy patronage and are ready to back their faith by lavish expenditures in advertising and furnishings to win their interest and support.

That brewer understood his business who assured his associates, at one of their conventions, that free distribution of beer to boys, for the purpose of creating in them an appetite for their poison, would be an investment that would return them abundant dividends.

He realized that if the brewers expected their business to grow and prosper financially they must have boys in training to take the places of their more than 100,000 victims that go to drunkards' graves in this country every year.

Judging from the time, effort and money expended, and the results secured, every

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phase of business activity is more alive to the importance of winning and holding the Boys and their support than are the Church and Sunday School. They seem to be without vision or power in this vital matter, for they hardly reach at all more than 40% of the boys and lose 80% of those they do enroll before the boys reach their majority.

This failure on the part of the Church condemns it in the sight of God and man, and is proof positive that the Church is following the leadership of incompetent and selfish men rather than the leadership of Christ and His Spirit.

Ministers, church officials and members are so busy with their regular round of work and duties that they have no time to study and to think this boy problem through. We all are so busy saving our own little, selfish lives that we are forgetting the more precious souls of our boys and girls.

Otherwise we would spend our days and nights praying for wisdom, and laboring to solve this question. For so long as we lose from our Sunday Schools eight out of every ten of the boys enrolled, we must hang our

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heads in shame and acknowledge that our church membership is little more than an empty profession. This statement is not too strong in face of the fact that the saloons are said to grip and destroy thirty out of every hundred boys in our land.

No matter how good our intentions and professions may be, so long as we "sit idly by" and let the saloon and the evil and vices it harbors and spreads abroad, destroy four boys for every one that the Sunday School holds, we have no right to call ourselves Christians or to claim to represent Christ in the world; for the Master said, "All power is given me in heaven and on earth," and we know that today the Church as organized and operated by men does not possess that wonderful "All power;" and we all know, too, that it never will possess it until it stops serving "mammon" and really begins to serve God.

In this book Mr. McCormick speaks with authority, for his work in Reading proves beyond peradventure, that intelligent, sympathetic, personal leadership can and will save the boys for the Church and

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Sunday School and thereby for Christian citizenship and leadership in the home, business, civic and church life of our land.

He has demonstrated that the Church can solve its boy problem if it is ready to pay the price in time, effort, money and self-sacrifice; and if it fails, it will not be because it cannot, but because it will not.

Let us stop wasting time and strength on purely denominational plans and peculiarities, for church membership counts only as it develops us into praying, giving, sacrificing Christians, ready to work with others without regard to race, creed, or condition, for the saving of our boys and girls and all mankind.

The answer to the question therefore, "What will we do with our boys?" depends entirely upon what we are doing and will do for them. The author of this book has made plain one way for such as earnestly desire to help our boys to help themselves.

HARRY J. HAYDEN,
Late President of the Chamber of Commerce.

Reading, Pa., May 25, 1915.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	Boys will be Boys	21
II	Following the Crowd	37
III	The Mind or the Heart	44
IV	That All may be One	55
V	The Welcome of the Boy	63
VI	Teaching the Class	72
VII	The Method	80
VIII	Praying	93
IX	Talking in Meeting	103
X	All the Week Through	115
XI	The Problem of the Village	131
XII	The Songs of a Boy	140
XIII	Joining the Church	148
XIV	The Boys' Man	153
XV	A Boy's Way	160

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FISHERS OF BOYS

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PREAMBLE

MINE is not Tomlinson's way. This is not "what I took from a printed book." A good many boy experts are ecclesiastical Tomlinsons. Theory runs riot; and borrowed ideas go stalking through the land. A first hand study of the boy is somewhat rare. Pope struck the nail on the head when—we edit Pope to suit the occasion—he observed that "the proper study of boykind is boy."

This book is a little essay on fish and fishing by one who has in his time been something of a fisherman.

To catch and to land and to have and to hold the boy is the aim of your true fisher. But by what means; and how?

Bribery won't do the work. Frequent feasts won't hold the boy. Moving picture shows and entertaining lectures and drills and games won't turn the trick. These things are useful in promoting a spirit of fraternity, in introducing the boys to

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intimacy and gayety, in bringing them together and making them like to come together. At such things they nibble, cautiously, playfully, inquiringly. As a seductive bait for hooking and landing them they are ineffective.

The baited hook is not the way of the wise man who goes a-fishing for boys. He had best equip himself with an ample net, calculated to catch swarms of boys, all at once; schools and shoals and gangs of them. He will then find the task pleasant; and the luck good.

Angled for that way, and captured thus, he will find the boys' Sunday School no longer a tiresomely formal process, but a really happy social experience.

For they will all be there, the whole bunch of them. And their "Sunday meeting" will not be a thing to be shunned and dreaded and run away from, but it will be as gay in its way as a basket ball game, as welcome in the course of events as their minstrel show.

For everybody else is there, all the athletes of their acquaintance, all the liveliest

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of their group, all the leaders of their gang, each of them loyal and enthusiastic, none of them ashamed or afraid.

This then is my sum and substance. This is my burden and my argument. Don't get at the gang through the individual, but at the individual through the gang. I hope in the following pages to make my theory clear. Though it is not a theory at all. It's just plain practice.

WILLIAM MCCORMICK.

Olivet Boys' Club,
Reading, Pa.
June, 1915.

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CHAPTER I

BOYS WILL BE BOYS

My theme is the boy. And my text is simply this: "Boys will be boys." If the reader will endeavor to bear this text in mind through all the crude vagaries of the succeeding pages he may be a bit edified. But if the gentle reader sets out with a differing theory, with a notion perhaps that I am seeking to prove that boys are or will be girls, or that boys are or may be, can or ought to be, might, could, would or should be angels, the gentle reader has a wrong idea of the author at the very outset, and a totally wrong conception of the purport of this little book.

The author's aim is indeed to show that boys—ordinary boys, rough boys, even wicked boys—may become through the practical helpfulness of church organizations—well, quite "different." But you will

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find no apotheosis in the final chapter. There will be no climax of virtue triumphant. Harps and crowns and that sort of thing won't go clashing and glittering through a grand transformation scene.

As a matter of fact the boy—and when I speak of the boy I mean the composite of the several thousand boys whom I have been privileged to know and to call by their first name and to have a goodly portion of them return the compliment—is indifferent to this sort of thing. Indeed he is likely to be a good deal bored by it. It sounds unreal to him. It savors of cant. It is too pietistic. It is the abnormal boy who is built along lines of pietism. What I write in this book is about the normal boy. The boy who is a boy and who will be a boy. The boy whose boyishness ought to be turned into good account. Not by eradicating that boyishness, which often seems to be the chief end and labor of those who would teach and benefit and uplift. But by turning that boyishness into right channels, and by making of it a strong, sturdy, genuine boyishness, which will, with a surprising suddenness, develop

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into an aggressive, loyal and public-spirited manhood.

Thus have I explained a little of my purpose and my plan. It is to take the boy in the rough and the raw and make of him a boy fine and stalwart and strong. Not with mere strength of body, not only with stalwartness of mind, but with an actual taming of his fiery soul and a thorough development of his real self.

NOT AN ORIGINAL PLOT

There have been many efforts made to do this very thing. My plot is not original. There is no new discovery in my ambition. Many others have labored toward the same end. Gymnastics will do it, says one. It is all a matter of education, says another. I believe it should be the work of the church of Christ. But it has been a strangely neglected work. Often it has been very imperfectly done. Yet is it a very practical work, and not indeed a very difficult one. That is why I essay to write of it.

They say this century marks the era of the boy's discovery. There has been an

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awakening sure enough. There is an avalanche of boy literature—about the boy and for the boy—nowadays. There was a dearth of all such a generation ago. There is a marked advance in Sunday School methods. There have been wonderful strides in Y. M. C. A. activities. The school system is much more complete than it used to be. Who ever heard of vocational guidance or social centres or Boy Scouts or dreamed of such facts or phrases in the nation's centennial year?

The boys' books of today would fill the shelves of a Carnegie library, with stacks of them left over, to be heaped in the back yard. There were few boys' books half a century ago. We bewail the empty youth of our great men who had only "Sanford and Merton" for their mental relaxation; who knew no gayer adventures than the mild episodes of a Rollo's guileless career; who, alas! had nothing to feed their fancy upon but a Bible, a "Pilgrim's Progress," a Foxe's "Book of Martyrs."

Let's dry our tears and be a bit sensible. The youth whose boyhood was thus en-

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riched was a good deal better off than the tabloid boy of today, whose week is incomplete unless there have been six picture shows crowded into it, thrillers all; and who reads not at all beyond "Mutt and Jeff" and the sporting pages.

We titter amiably over the crude drawings of the "Book of Martyrs" and jest lightly over the benighted youth whose fancy here was fed. But we jest without intelligence. In Foxe's gruesome tales lies buried the stuff that heroes are made of. Many a real hero has had his genesis, I dare say, in the fires and the fury of these historic sufferers for conscience' sake. There is nothing like Foxe's book in modern literature. And the boys would not read it if there was.

TOO MUCH MACHINERY

Which is but a paragraph in defense of the good old days. Here is another: I doubt me much whether with all the machinery of the modern church, with all the elaborate trappings of the Y. M. C. A., with all the magnificence of our modern boys'

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plants and the paraphernalia of our social activities, we get any nearer to the heart of the boy than did Robert Raikes in his dismal cellar or Dwight Moody in his Chicago Sunday School.

We go in elaborately for organization nowadays. We have systems and methods galore. There is a whirl of conventions, a round of conferences, a deluge of committees, a cataclysm of hired superintendents and salaried directors and elaborately paid teachers. There is good in it all, I suppose. That good I would not combat or those systems I would not undermine. It is a question, though, that I have a right to ask, whether the results are commensurate with the efforts; whether the outcome justifies the expenditure; whether after all the laboring mountain is not giving birth to a more or less ridiculous mouse.

This is in regard to boys' work only. I leave to others all other estimates. It is the boy and the church that I am considering. Has the chuch done its duty by the boy? Is the church treating this boy fairly? Are we with all our conventions, district, county,

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state, national, world's, getting the boy into the church and keeping him there? Developing him as he all unconsciously clamors to be developed? Making of him a man and a Christian, not nominal and conventional, not temporal and occasional, but deeply, genuinely, enthusiastically, eternally?

Now I would hardly be asking these questions if I believed they could all be answered with an easy affirmation. My very questioning expresses my doubt. And my doubt so nearly approaches negation that it seems to me scarcely worth the while to stop to prove my point.

THE NEGLECTED BOY

Much of this questioning has been done by other honest souls in much the same way that I have done. The answer has resembled mine. The multitude of questions and the uncertainty of the answers has led to a general confession. It has been widely admitted that the boy has been neglected. An effort has been made to atone for that neglect. The effort has had its expression in

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the conferences and conventions aforesaid. There have been organizations, schemes, surveys, campaigns. But have we really gotten hold of the boy thereby? Has the kingdom of Christ really made much advancement in the ranks of the nation's boyhood?

Though I write as a doubter, I write as an optimist too. What the church has done for the boys of the land seems to me singularly scant. What the church can do and may do seems to be gloriously abundant. The boy is accessible and attainable if the church desires him.

But the church has no right to go fishing for boys with grandmotherly bait. The church must not substitute shadow for substance. The church must not corral a little group of its own coddled boyhood, children of the sanctuary, reared carefully in sheltered homes, trained like Timothy from their youth up; admitting them to its communion, enrolling them in its young people's society, escorting them to high places in its juvenile choir, and then carry down to the annual conference complacent

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statistics about a host of conversions and a rich ingathering.

No church has a right to the serene content which two-thirds of the churches are today enjoying. Many churches are not holding their own. But even a church that holds its own and no more is in a pitiful case. The sparse sprinkling of boys in the average Sunday School is pathetic testimony as to those things which ought to have been done but which were not done.

Drop into any Sunday School and count them. Then drop out again and count those you meet on the street. The discrepancy is likely to be appalling. If you're honest it will make you fidgety. And your fidgets cannot be calmly glossed over with the excuse that the outsiders are Catholics or Hebrews or Socinians or Buddhists, or that their Sunday School meets at some other hour.

The plain, blunt fact is that there are thousands within beck and call of the church bell who ought to be within, but who remain studiously and perennially without. They were outside last year.

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They will be outside next year. And a dozen years hence, when they are no longer boys, they will be much farther outside; much more emphatically and hopelessly so.

And this despite your international conventions, in the face of your district institutes, regardless of your teacher training classes, irrespective of your baby bands, your graded lessons, your organized classes and a long line of other admirable and necessary devices.

THE THEORIES AND THE FACTS

You have followed the rules of the experts with a devout obedience. You have devoted a portion of your Sunday's lesson to a minute study of Palestine geography. You have drilled your boys painstakingly in the books of the Bible. You have given prizes to the cherub who finds a verse the quickest. You have awarded diplomas to him who most glibly recites a chosen chapter. And you have handed over your class of real rascals to the mild-mannered young man who has just completed his course in teacher training, who has the Bible at his

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fingers' ends, and who can reel off the chronology of the minor prophets without turning a hair.

But you find your boys drifting for all that. As the boys grow big the class grows small. The mild young man teaches beautifully. But the rascals don't come round any more. He thinks on the whole he could do better with girls. So do you. But you wonder why. And you quite fail to see why the experts' advice does not hold good as to the geography of Palestine. It is as hard, you find, to interest those rascally boys in the bounding of Perea as to catch a bird with a pinch of salt. Yet the textbooks tell you quite differently. The experts' theories sound so plausible. Your own meagre results come so nigh to failure. There must be something wrong.

Thus have hundreds of concatenated pastors, superintendents and teachers numerously resolved. The something wrong they nearly always decide inheres in the boy himself. It is the boys' fault that they cannot be corralled. They are too stupid to be taught, too wicked to be helped, too unruly

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to be guided. It seems really too bad. And after you had taken such pains to impress upon them the geographical features of Samaria and the social customs of the dynasty of Tiglath Pileser!

But I speak up for the boy. Blamable he may be, but not wholly so. He is readier to learn than one would think. But he must be taught aright. He must be given what he wants. He must be, moreover, treated as a boy. And not as a college-bred boy either; not a boy of pedigreed parentage; not a boy of high school erudition or of cultivated tastes.

There are such boys in some Sunday Schools. There are pedigrees and diplomas and culture here and there. How you are to meet them I leave to you and others. I write of the average boy in the Sunday School and out of it; the boy who works for his living and whose parents work for theirs; the boy of slender home training; the boy who reads little, studies less, works a good deal, loafs when he can; who runs with the gang; who does as other boys do; who goes to Sunday School if the crowd

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goes; who otherwise follows the crowd to the game, to the "show," to the joint, to the devil.

This is the average, typical boy. The Lord loved the common people, said Lincoln, and proved it by making so many of them. It is the common boy I am writing about, the multitudinously common boy. As to the extraordinary sort, of college breeding, of aristocratic lineage, of spiritual upbringing, of literary taste—teach him, catch him, help him as you may or can. He is eliminated from this discussion of ours. There are millions left behind as he takes his departure. Let's for awhile think upon these millions.

OTHER PEOPLE'S BOYS

Most of the books written about boys are an appeal to parents. The boy chiefly written about and considered is the reader's own boy.

Now here is where this present volume may differ from its predecessors and successors. This is not mainly for parents. It is not a treatise on the bringing up of your

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sons. It concerns itself with other people's children. It is not individualistic. It treats of the mass. The great Master of men had his memorable interviews with Nicodemus, with the woman of Samaria, with Simon Peter. But it was "seeing the multitude" that made Him most compassionate. It was over the great populous city that He wept. He spoke tender words in His dying hour to His own mother and provided loyally for her welfare. But at another time He answered with a suggestion of impatience those who reminded Him that His kinsfolk were at hand. Who were His mother and His brethren? He queried almost sharply. He surely was not lacking in affection for His own "folks" when He reminded His companions that His household embraced all the world, and that all were His brethren, His children, His kin.

So there is nothing self-centered about this book of ours. It does not apply to the carefully nurtured child of your own fireside. It concerns the multitude of those who are less carefully nurtured, less kindly fathered, more in need of mothering; a mul-

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titude neglected, not in the sense of poverty or hunger or sickness or bodily need, but lacking the home training that is the goodly heritage of your own son, uncared for by a ceremonious church, unsought by an early abandoned school, unsamaritaned by a society quite as pious as the Jericho priest and just as busy as the hurried Levite.

The world is full of this type of boy. In the town wherein I dwell, populated by 100,000 people, there are fully 4,500 boys at work; boys ranging in age from 14 to 20. Not many of them are sons of poverty; not neglected in the ordinary sense; not necessarily ignorant or unlettered. But beyond the school's grasp; largely beyond their parents' influence; only a few of them shepherded by a painstaking church. Mostly like the multitude that the Master sighed over, a scattered flock with no shepherd at all.

It is easy to imagine the expansion of that working boys' army. From sea to sea there are many thousands of boys such as this. Is it not worth all the ingenuity of older men to lead and direct and help them?

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Is there not room and need for Boy Scouts galore, Knights of King Arthur innumerable, Endeavor Societies, Y. M. C. A. branches, boys' clubs and a thousand other forms of activity?

It seems worth while, too, for us to take a somewhat new view of the ever-increasing problem, and to suggest practical and well tested methods for the uplift, not of your own sheltered children, but of the mighty army of dinner-pailed, wage-earning boys, in whose interest nobody shows nearly as much zealous activity as is displayed perennially, night and day, by the tireless Beelzebub.

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CHAPTER II

FOLLOWING THE CROWD

PRIMARILY, the boy loves a crowd. He goes where the mob is. He does not care particularly where the mob is going or what it is going after. It may be a circus parade or a dog fight. It may be a ball game; it may be even a sermon. How a boy will fight to work his way into a Billy Sunday meeting if everybody else is fighting to get in too, and if there are more people than seats! But it would be boy nature to scorn even a Billy Sunday if the audience was sparse, and he, poor lad, was almost the only boy there.

This has been boy nature through the centuries. You recall the boy who helped the Master to perform one of the gentlest and kindest of all His miracles. Had a grown man been possessed of five loaves and two fishes he would have kept them snug-

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gled secretly in his pocket and not have breathed a word of it to the listener who sat next to him on the grass.

The boy was generous; which is a striking characteristic of boyhood. Another characteristic is that he followed the crowd. He was not sermon-hungry. He was not, I presume, keen for getting talked to. He may not even have sensed any marvels or anticipated miracles. He had just gone to the great woods meeting because there was a crowd there. He must have been touched by what he saw and heard. Like the Master, he was moved with compassion. It was essentially the multitudes that did it. It was the great hungry crowd that made him eager to help.

I have often wondered what would have happened had that boy been as selfish as his elders, as stingy as human kind in general. His generosity is one of the high lights of that miracle story. But he never would have learned to be generous, or had the opportunity to be, had he not yielded to the instinct of humankind—of boykind—and followed the crowd.

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An instinct centuries old even then. The boys of Noah's time were not presumably all vicious. Nor they of the days of Lot. The neighbors called them scalawags doubtless, and deplored that there were such things as boys. But their perishing in the world's flood and their ruin in Gomorrah's ashes was but characteristic of the boy type. There were not enough people in the ark to make it worth while getting saved. They preferred to stay with the multitude, what though it meant a drowning. They would not flee with Lot. That was only for women. They stayed with the throng; and perished cheerfully there.

That picture show is the best in the boy's view which is attended by the largest crowd. That ball game is the finest where the swarm is greatest. The boy wants to be where the other boys are. Heaven would be a lonesome and a melancholy place to the modern boy if he were to see across the chasm all the fellows that he loved; perishing maybe, and wretched, yet boyishly comfortable. For misery loves company. And

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misery is less miserable where there is a gang of intimates to share it with.

WHY ISOLATE THE BOY?

Why, then, not apply this perfectly patent principle to our Sunday Schools? Why in our attempts to make the boy virtuous do we so stupidly isolate him?

There are few that be saved, we smugly assure ourselves. If we read carefully we will note that the Master never said so. But we like to think it's so. It's a comforting theory. Therefore our churches must be small, our congregations must be slim, our Sunday Schools must be diminutive, and our stock of boys scant. That there are thousands on the Sunday excursion, that there are swarms at the Sunday ball game, that the Sunday theatres are jammed and crammed, and that in each case boys are predominant, we accept as a matter of course. And just as complacently do we turn to our Sunday School room and count there a dozen boys or a score, and thereupon rejoice over the faithful and thank the dear Lord for all the saints assembled here!

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Meanwhile the dozen or the score are having a rather mournful time of it. Few as they are, they are scattered round the room in tiny groups. They are not allowed to realize that other boys are there as lonely and unhappy as themselves.

Even a little group of a dozen or a score might prove formidable if they could be all huddled together. They cannot, and they are not. We scatter them afar. We divide them up. We give to one group as preceptor a lovely lady with red rosebuds in her bonnet, who comes round when it suits her and who often fails to come round at all. Others we hand out to persons of equally irregular habit, with just about as much sense of their responsibility and just as little knowledge of the heart of the boy.

The boys, in their little groups of two or three, are so mischievous and so uproarious —we reason—that we could not possibly pool them and bunch them, even in a time of emergency. If all the irregular teachers should be absent at once, there would be calamity. Earthquakes might come and avalanches, if we should herd the lonely

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dozen or the pitiful score all in one for a single Sunday.

THE BIG CLASS

But, frankly, I do not believe any such thing would ensue. Bring the dozen or the score, or two dozen or two score, together, and give them the right sort of teacher—even a teacher who cannot bound Samaria and is doubtful as to the precise length of the Dead Sea; even one who ignores the rules of English grammar and doubles his negatives frightfully, but who knows the loving heart of a boy and has some reasonable acquaintance with the heroes of the base ball world—and there will be tranquil peace and ravenous attention. The boys will listen and they will learn. And—marvel of marvels—some of them will go home and relate to an astonished mother things they never thought of telling her before—things, that is, that they heard in Sunday School.

I believe in big classes for boys. I believe in this wasteful age that there is an immense amount of waste in the modern Sunday School. Settle your girl problems

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as you will. Teach the young women as best you can. Let the primary section and the cradle roll and the home department and the teacher training class run on undisturbed, for all that I may say or do.

But, if you want to hold your boys, please bear in mind the primordial instinct. Consider a moment the psychology of the crowd. Recognize the boy's hatred of loneliness. Seize upon and cultivate the spirit of the gang. And see whether by sheer force of numbers and the impulse of contact you cannot evolve out of restless and mischievous youth a solidarity and a compactness which will count for perennial and enduring righteousness.

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CHAPTER III

THE MIND OR THE HEART

THE day school and the Sunday School are two very different institutions. However similar they may be in the early grades, the similarity is very remote when you are dealing with the working boy. He is bound to resist the technicalities of the catechism. He is not handy at long-worded verses in a many-chaptered Bible. He does not like to be asked to read a verse even if he can find it. He cannot read well and he knows it. Nay, he feels it. The other boys will laugh at his stumbling and fumbling. And the big, gawky, ignorant boy, who can face a cannon unblinking, and thrash six other boys without a murmur, is deathly afraid of being laughed at.

The other boys—some of them—are eager enough to do the reading. The smart boy loves to do it and show off in the doing

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of it. There is a diversity of gifts. But to display this diversity in the Sunday School class is a poor way of teaching the manliness of Christianity. There is 20 minutes at best for the patient teacher. If into this must be crowded the geography of Samaria and the household habits of the Ephesians and the intricacies of effectual calling and the proper pronunciation of Melchizedek, there's no mystery about the unpopularity of the Sunday School. It is too dry, too dull, too hard, too embarrassing, too spectacular, too companionless.

Drop the day school method for these restless boys. Do not burden them with those things which edify not. Give to them what they want in the way they want it. And you may be surprised to find how cordially they accept it and how glad they are to get it.

"Telling is not teaching" we have been reminded over and over again. It is one of those mischievous epigrams of pedagogy which are likely to deceive the very elect. Surely a day school teacher could not make much progress if she were to do naught but

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lecture. But the day school is very obviously not the Sunday School.

The day school is a continuous performance of ten sessions a week. The Sunday School comes but 52 times a year, with a total of 20 minutes each day. There are many absences. Instead of four sessions a month, there may be one or two. Indeed in the case of the boys we are chiefly considering there are often none at all. What folly, then, to give over to geography or philology or even to theology the time which ought to be spent in instructing these boys in a righteousness of which they have only the faintest conception, and of which, unless you teach them aright, they may never learn at all!

The modern boy no more likes to be quizzed than he likes to display his ignorance about spelling and pronunciation. Teaching him how to say Melchizedek is futile enough. But to try to draw him out before a little group of other boys as to what this verse means, or as to what the apostle referred to here, or on what other occasion did St. Peter do the same thing, or what are

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the distinguishing differences between the epistle to the Galatians and that to the Colossians—to question a boy thus, even if the boy may know, which he generally doesn't, is a sort of cruelty to children which ought to be punishable by law.

Your average working boy does not have much idea as to what you are driving at. And even if he has he does not, if he be properly modest, care to display it before other boys. If you were his private tutor he might express himself. Or if he were in the day school room, with boys of his own age, he might be quite frank and outspoken. In the Sunday School class, among boys of varied virtues and widely different educational standards, he is not likely to answer your questions hopefully, or to talk back intelligently, or to discuss the issues of life with any genuine boyishness.

TELLING THINGS

"Telling is not teaching," says the epigram. Hang the epigram, I suggest. Consider the boy. Multiply the boy by 25 or thereabouts. Get him and his companions

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into a corner sufficiently far removed from the giggling girl down the aisle, and from the scrutiny of all the young women with rose buds in their bonnets. Talk to the boys then and tell them things. You need not wander far from the Bible to do the telling. You may confine yourself absolutely to Bible incidents, not for one Sunday only but for a long series of Sundays.

Thrill them with the career of an heroic Paul. Startle them with the unwavering faith of a doughty Daniel. Bring before their astonished eyes—for their eyes will be as wide open as their ears, and their imaginations will be drinking in every syllable—the majesty of a manly Christ, the strength of His endurance, the tenderness of His pity.

And remind them by the way that these virtues are not all dead and gone, but that a Grenfell lives the Christ life on the bleak coast of Labrador, how a Higgins spent and was spent and lately died in the service of the lumber jacks, that a Christy Mathewson defies the drink evil as splendidly as those three Hebrew youths who went cheer-

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fully to a fiery furnace rather than defile themselves with the king's meat.

The intensity of the boys' eagerness as you mention Mathewson may inspire you to tell more. Of Rube Waddell who went to wrack and ruin for much the same reason as the jailed and sightless Samson. Of a Connie Mack who will tolerate no player who is not a total abstainer. Of the runner who, Mike Murphy tells us, lost out in the Olympian games because, like Lot's wife, he looked back. Of a Jimmy Paterson, intercollegiate champion sprinter, who never ran without praying. Of a Mike Dorizas, marvelously strong man, who declined to foul at wrestling or foot ball, because, as he tersely put it, "How can I? Why, I'm a Christian."

There need be no eloquence here. There is no call for high sounding phrases, or no demand for advanced erudition. But there must be some understanding of boyhood and of those things which boys like to know about. If there are half a dozen listeners, they may listen well. If there are twice as many, they will listen four times as well.

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And if your group be 25 or 40, you will find its interest increasing in proportion as the size of the group increases.

For boyhood loves a crowd. And boyhood loves to listen to what 39 other boys are listening to with equal eagerness. Two or three may be a very restless mob. Two or three dozen may prove to be as docile as lambs, and to flock together just as gladly.

Mere stories, you may say, with a fine air of criticism. Yes, perhaps. So doubtless scribes and Pharisees commented upon the matchless Story-Teller. But stories with a moral that cuts and burns, a moral that sinks deep and lives long, that travels far and reaches down and grips the fancy and stirs the heart. "Long, long afterwards in an oak" you may find your probing arrow "still unbroke." It is marvellous how a boy grown to manhood and fatherhood will recall to you—who have altogether forgotten it—that story that you used to tell about so and so, which had a winged sting to it and which has its meaning even yet.

I can see no good reason why a class of boys of this sort should not be taught in this

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way with increasing interest and growing grace. Such a teacher by such a method would hold his boys. And he would probably have twice as many boys to hold at the end of the year.

Nor would it be a year-old class only. It would not disintegrate after the fashion of full many a short-lived class. The boys might in time become men. It is a way that boys have. If the teacher went on progressively giving them what they wanted, feeding them what they needed, I can see no good reason why the class should ever grow less or perish at length even with the teacher's decay.

THE MAGIC OF THE CROWD

The boy loves a crowd. And the boy will be happy in the class that is crowded. If there is not room for them all, if some of them must sit on the floor, so much the better. You never heard of a boy leaving his Sunday School because there were too many fellows there. He leaves primarily because there are not enough, because he feels so lonesome, because his Sunday School seems

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to him the most solitary place on the earth's face, and because the recurrent Sunday, with its haunting suggestion of Sunday School going, seems to him the dreariest day of all the week. "Day of all the week the best," the hymn book has it. "Day of all the week the worst," is the revised version, according to the nagged and browbeaten and misunderstood boy, son of full many a doting mother and well meaning father.

But it won't be the worst if the gang gets together on that day and goes to a place desired. And if the gang gets together and goes churchward, and if by some marvellous process the Sunday School becomes the desirable goal, the boy will be just about as happy there as if it were a place of riotous revelry, or a world's championship base ball game.

There are difficulties, to be sure. The superintendent will object to this merging of classes. The available teacher may not be at hand. And, worst and most important of all, the boy's gang doesn't go to that particular Sunday School. The par-

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ents of the boy's gang insist that he must be saved by Episcopalian methods or by Presbyterian methods or by Dutch Reformed methods. Declining to be saved in this orthodox style the boy then fails of salvation entirely. He goes lonesomely to the Sunday School of his parents' peculiar choice. Or, as in most cases, he goes not at all.

Here my theme becomes difficult. The boy likes the companionship of his gang, be it at a base ball game, at a Sunday School or wheresoever. To the ball game, to the "show," to the swimming hole they can all go in a bunch. In respect to Sunday School there is trouble. Thomas is a Presbyterian, what though he may swear like a Trojan and swipe like a good-for-nothing. Richard is a Reformed Episcopalian, though you would never guess it from the coarseness of his jests or the frivolity of his habits. Henry is a Baptist. He tells you so, and you are constrained to believe it. Though you wonder at some of the curious things you have heard Henry say. They do not sound strongly Baptistic. Are all Baptists so? you wonder.

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Here is the difficulty: How to amalgamate these theological differences, and how to mold Tom and Dick and Harry into one, to maintain the solidarity of their gang, to give them the companionship of the crowd, and yet to rear them in the ways of righteousness and peace.

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CHAPTER IV

THAT ALL MAY BE ONE

NOW for this difficulty I have no cut and dried remedy. If I were to make the world's history over again, or even the last four centuries of it, I would entirely rearrange this matter of denominations. I would not entirely obliterate such earnest and sincere reformers as Calvin, Zwingli, Luther, Knox and Wesley. But I would suggest to them that they enter upon some working agreement to the effect that the boys of the twentieth century, who do not know the first thing about theology and who do not want to know, should be permitted to go to the Sunday School of their choice without giving their parson the shivers and melting their good mothers to tears.

It seems to me quite conceivable that a boy of Lutheran parentage might learn much good in a Baptist Sunday School, and that a lineal Methodist might be better off

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in a Presbyterian Sunday School than in none at all.

But this is not the modern attitude. Parents who have not darkened a church door for years are appalled that their John should darken any church door but the one from whence they emerged when they were wedded. And their pastor, who might be expected to be broad himself and to teach breadth to these inactive parishioners of his, backs them up and leads them on. He is unmoved and uninterested apparently in such minor Sabbath day activities of John as base ball revels and crap games. But when he learns that John has started going with the gang to a Sunday School of divergent faith he is up in arms. He loses no time to prevent. He is swift to act.

The theological differences between the two faiths may be exceedingly scant. He may be a Primitive Methodist. John may have hied him to the Methodist Episcopalians. Not that John recognizes any difference between one set of Methodists and another. Or not that he cares a rap what the church is labelled. All that John knows

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or cares about is that he wants to be with the gang. If the gang turns Lutheran, that is John's forte. If the gang chances to be Baptist, John wants to be a Baptist too.

If John is ambitious to be an angel and with the angels stand, it is merely because he recognizes in the other angels his cronies, Mike, Pete and Bill. When John declines to be an angel or to have any part or parcel in such sentimental longing, it is because he is certain none of the gang will be there. And he fears that if they see him with a harp and crown they will giggle and sneer and say things; perhaps throw them.

Now it strikes me that the good parson is unduly disturbed and that the parents with whom he consults are all unnecessarily worked up. They have failed for the most part to interest John in their own particular church—which they may very infrequently attend; which they may not, in fact, have attended since their bridal day. But they are "Methodist born and Methodist bred, and when they die there's a Methodist dead." They hold tenaciously—not to their religion, as I might have re-

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marked; not even to their church, I might have said; but to their denomination and its name. And their alleged pastor, who should be trusted to lead them into plainer paths and by more benevolent waters, goads them on to this narrow sectarianism, which often leads to the absolute and final unchurching of their boy John.

And a multitude of boy Johns. For this is a typical case. Thus is history repeated all the land over. It may be an exaggerated case. It does not, of course, fit every parent and every parson. But there are scattered over the country a host of parents, more or less indifferent to religious influence, yet sternly sectarian, stoutly denominational, insistent that their boy John must go to his own Sunday School or to none. Whereupon John chooses the latter alternative with grateful glee. And everybody is content.

John has outgrown his own Sunday School, which the minister placidly deplores. But if John should start going to another minister's Sunday School, up the street or round the corner, then there would

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be parochial activity, strikingly reminding one of the way that certain ancient unworthies used to compass land and sea to make one proselyte.

If I could make history over, I repeat, I would suggest that the bickering founders of the nation's 300 denominations enter into a working agreement to let the boys alone. Bring the boy up in the way he ought to go; induce him to stick to the Sunday School of his up-bringing just as long as can be; but when the inevitable age comes of the boy's reluctance, of his truancy, of his absolute refusal to go further—it is pitiful that boys should thus depart from parental leading strings, but it is a condition and not a theory that confronts us—then let the boy go to the gang's Sunday School if he wants. And let him not be forbidden but encouraged to do so.

If the boy's parents were to enter into such a working agreement, if the parents' pastors were sensible enough to keep hands off and to assent to the situation, the boy problem as related to the Sunday School would become far easier. Then your prob-

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lem is no longer that of a little scattered, heterogeneous group of lads that will not mix, but it is a gang or a series of gangs. You have lost some of your boys who have run with other gangs and gone to other Sunday Schools. But in their place you have gangs of your own. Little gangs that can be merged into one big gang, with a cohesiveness and a community spirit which will be beautiful to behold and capital to work with.

The boys who are all one gang on the ball field or at the crap game are now become a Sunday School gang. Not rigidly pious, not sternly ecclesiastical, not suddenly reformed. But following their leader like huddled sheep, going where the other fellows go; not splitting up, as used to be the unhappy custom, into groups of Baptists and Methodists, but just as welcome in a united gang at Sunday School as they have always been in the crap game or on the ball field.

A FAR DISTANT DAY

It will be a long time before Christian unity reaches such a happy climax as this.

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The parents who go least to church are the ones likely to be most concerned about their denomination. The father who is most indifferent to his son's running wild is the first to notify the minister if the boy runs into an alien Sunday School. And the minister who has given out as the opening hymn "We are not divided, all one body we," and has then preached upon the men who cast out devils but followed not after Peter, James and John—much to the trio's discomfiture, but to the evident satisfaction of their Master—may be the first to hunt out the lad and remind him of the error of his way, in neglecting the ancestral means of grace and following the gang to the worship of foreign Sunday School gods.

But supposing that some day parents and ministers and the world in general get an accretion of common sense along this particular line, the boy problem in the Sunday School will be promptly simplified. If the cry of proselytism is dropped and if the Sunday-schoolless boy is allowed to choose his favorite Sunday School and made welcome there; if the gang spirit is cultivated

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and followed, the teaching which in so many schools is a burden or a bore, and which so often seems barren of results, will become comparatively easy and bountifully fruitful.

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CHAPTER V

THE WELCOME OF THE BOY

BUT before we go any farther let us consider this fact, that some churches do not really and truly want the boy. That is, they do not want him in his raw, crude state. Spiced, perfumed, blue-necktied and white-collared, bath-tubbed, manicured, slick-haired and dancing-school-mannered, the boy is moderately welcome. But this type of boy is rare. He does not enter at all into this treatise of ours.

The church does not want the boy. Or, if we may concede that the Church with a large C wants the Boy with a big B as an abstract proposition, it is still a fact that various individual churches do not want the specific, concrete, individual boy, with his rough manners, his uncouth behavior, his rude attire, his ungracious mien.

The Master of the church had a liking for publicans and sinners. He especially

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emphasized the open door and the forceful invitation to the sick and the poor, the halt and the blind. His church has been pretending ever since that this sort of folk is welcome. It has been in large part a sorry pretence.

Many a church has hardly cared. The theory itself was admirable. The church has preferred to carry out that theory by proxy. It has shrunk in fastidious dismay from the personal, short-range practice of it.

There is a familiar story told about a grand dame of Holland. She went to church one day in all her glory dressed. There was a stranger in her pew, a meek, quiet-mannered man whose lack of adornment contrasted strangely with her own magnificent attire. She looked daggers at him, so the story runs. Through her lorgnette doubtless. Which is quite easy to believe. Humanity is alike all round the globe. Proud woman casts ocular daggers at meek man quite as commonly, I dare say, in Dutch Holland as in cosmopolitan Chicago, in gay New York, in little—what

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did you say was the name of your home town? Her brief remarks, but especially her ferocious looks, bade the stranger get out. His exit was prompt. Whereupon, falling on her knees, the good woman was soon lost in a revery of prayer, thanking the Lord doubtless that she was not as other women were, especially not like the wife of this meek, obsequious stranger.

The climax to the story is that the stranger happened to be the King of Sweden. He was not wearing his royal regalia that day. He had left his crown at home. He retired to a back seat near the door, the story runs on, and there enjoyed the services rapturously. Especially if, as I hope, he had a sense of humor.

It is a good story and, we will suppose, a true one. The tale of Asa Packer is less familiar. It is also much nearer home. It is quite as characteristic, though its sequel is a bit more tragic.

Asa Packer was a railroad hand. He went as a lad to Mauch Chunk, a little Pennsylvania town, to work his way in the world. Being of Calvinistic up-bringing,

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he attended the morning service in the little Presbyterian Church. They were haughty people there. They were duly impressed with their superiority. They took pains to impress it upon others, too. They were the salt of the earth; they the elect and chosen ones. The rustle of their skirts betokened it. The gleam of their eye declared it.

Consequently young Asa had a sorry time of it. It was his first Sunday away from home; and a very homesickly Sunday to be sure. He looked as seedy as the King of Sweden presumably; and there was none to do him reverence. The gilded ladies passed him gloriously by. The fidgety ushers coughed and looked the other way. The austere parson had never a word of welcome. And when evening came Asa went to the little Episcopal church to see whether things might be better and different.

With a strange sort of prescience the Episcopalians threw themselves at Asa. They fell on his neck and welcomed him. They bade him come early and often. They took his name and address and inquired

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about his work and his leisure. They questioned him as to his home and his prospects and his likes and his dislikes. They introduced him to everybody; and they promised individually and collectively to call on him, to invite him to supper, to show him the sights, to befriend him.

It was befriending that Asa needed. It was this outflow of welcome that he longed for. He went to his boarding place walking on air. Asa was an Episcopalian from that day forth.

Poor, seedy, forlorn and homesick, Asa Packer became rich at length; the richest man in all the region, the builder of great railway systems, the founder of universities. A great almsgiver too; a magnificent dispenser of largess. But—and here's the point; please mark it well—Mr. Packer's college was not a Presbyterian institution. The churches and homes and hospitals that he built were not given a Calvinistic label.

Lehigh University, his chief and greatest gift, is distinctly an Episcopalian college. His hospitals, churches and homes also. This son of pious Presbyterian up-

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bringing was frozen out of the Presbyterian Church upon his first lonesome Sunday away from home. The little church around the corner welcomed him cordially, and, let us hope, sincerely. They were entertaining angels unawares. He probably had not the slightest thought that some day he could play the angel. But it served the Presbyterians right. It proves that hospitality pays. It is a stinging rebuke to the cold, top-lofty folk who banish a King of Sweden and have no room for a Nazarene carpenter.

A CHURCH WITHOUT VISION

The habit has not changed with the rolling years. Nor is the church any less haughty now than when Sir Launfal rode forth to seek the Holy Grail and thought to hasten his quest by flinging careless gold to a loathly beggar. Sir Launfal missed the vision, the legend tells us. Small wonder that so many churches round about us—right in your street too; perhaps the very church you rent a pew in—grope blindly, visionless.

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Now let who will pursue this inquiry further. It is not our business to arraign the church for its pride or to condemn all Christendom for its arrogance. We are considering the peculiar problem of the boy. Which in many cases means the rough and noisy boy; in various instances signifies the grimy and unlettered boy.

We are not suggesting that our sanctuaries be turned into rescue missions and that our cathedrals be done over into Salvation Army barracks. Such conclusions and transformations we leave to others. But we do protest that the boy problem can never be solved until the church really and truly welcomes the boys. And we do believe that, howsoever kindly the average church may feel toward the boy's sister, his mother, his grandsire, it cares little for the concrete person of the boy himself. It sighs when he comes. It is glad when he's gone. It coddles and gloats over him in theory. It snubs and scorns him in fact.

Now the Sunday School that wants to reach the boys must first of all make up its mind to take them as they are, to welcome

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all sorts, to reject none. There is a good deal of shenanigan about the hospitality of some Sunday Schools. They mean well. And they believe themselves sincere. But a towsled head frightens them. Grimy fingers stir them to dismay. The lack of a necktie, the absence of a collar shock the dressed-up folk more than a procession of the seven deadly sins.

DOWN TO THE LEVEL

Church people must get down to the boy level before they can hope to win the boy. The church must be in earnest before it can achieve. The Sunday School that seeks to win the boys must first of all genuinely want the boys. In many cases, the church, the bride of Christ, is as proud and "stuck up" in its bridal regalia as ever the Holland dame aforesaid. Not infrequently its touch is as chill and clammy as that of the Mauch Chunk Presbyterians.

But let us suppose a heartier welcoming. Let us imagine a breaking up of its haughtiness. Let us picture a mellowing of its pride, a tempering of its high-and-mighti-

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ness. And let us assume that here and there a careful, devoted, ambitious church really wants the boys—not just the rising Asa Packers, not the coming Governors, not the Kings of Sweden in disguise, but all the boys of every type and color and sort, with an especial liking for the rough and frowsy boys, and a particular preference for the so-called bad, the admittedly hopeless, the duly labeled incorrigible boys. Let us suppose, I say, that here and there some churches really want all these, and are ready to labor with might and main and means and enterprise for reaching and corralling and anchoring them. Well, then—

But herein endeth the fifth chapter.

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CHAPTER VI

TEACHING THE CLASS

IF the people are willing and the boys are there, the next thing is to begin teaching them. We are assuming a good deal—that is that denominational differences have been broken down, that the Ladies' Aid Society has been placated, that the sexton has been bought off somehow and ceased his grumbling, and that the minister believes these boys actually have souls and that they have not been doomed to be damned from the foundation of the world. Some assumption, I grant you. But "let's pretend," as the children say.

You must have a teacher, sure enough. But for this you may not have to go so far afield as you at first imagine. I have no personal prejudice against a lady with rose buds in her bonnet. If she knows the heart of a boy, and if she will agree to be regular, and if she will follow my advice and teach

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my way, I will waive all possible objection and instal her forthwith. But generally ladies, rose buds or no, are not the best for this work you are entering upon. If it is to be a permanent, continuous work, starting in boyhood and running on to manhood, a man is the best teacher for both grown and growing boy.

It is better in following this new-fangled plan to get hold of a new-fangled teacher. That is, one not immersed too deep in book lore, not too profoundly tinctured with Assyriology, not too grave in mien or too solemn in accent. Not too learned in fact; not bookish at all. Preferably a man fond of adventure; even to the adventure of entering, with Daniel-like fortitude, into a den full of ravening, roaring boys.

He ought to have a room to himself, he and his boys. The modern system of circular benches is not adapted to close attention. Glance impersonally over a Sunday School during its lesson hour, and you will note the inadaptability. Here and there is a little group of heads massed fixedly about a centre piece of teacher. This is the way

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the circular bench maker meant it to be. But here and there again are various restless scholars, both of the male and female persuasion, chatting gaily with the members of an adjoining class, sticking pins in the neighbor next to them, tossing wads of paper clear across the aisle, thinking and chattering of anything but the subject in hand, and much more concerned as to what is going on in a distant part of the room than in the affairs of their own particular semi-circle.

Is this a gross libel upon the typical Sunday School? Well, then, it is not typical. It is only occasional. It seems to me like a rather familiar picture. If you have never seen or heard of anything like it, yours has been a happy Sunday School experience; also perhaps a rather limited one.

A HAPPY CAPTIVITY

Four windowless walls make a very convenient cage. Gather your boys in there, where there is nothing to see beyond their prison pen; no space for a roaming imag-

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ination, nobody to throw wads at, nobody to return the compliment. Huddle them together in a narrow crib. Hedge them in and shut the door. Lock it if you think wise. And now you have them.

But no prisoners are they; not galled and chafing captives. Boylike they will delight in the snugness. They will revel in the jam. They will be proud of their dungeon. The click of the latch, the turn of the key, will be the final acme of their delight. They have got the best class in the school, they will chipperly confide to each other.

Thus have you made a capital beginning. There is a gang spirit at the very outset. It is not you, the teacher, who has brought it about. It is the tiny cupboard of a walled off corner that has done it. It is quite like camping out. It resembles a cabin in the woods. There is romantic happiness there. And as a beginning, and for a brief moment, they think going to Sunday School is the jolliest lark on earth.

Ah, but you say, the delight will be fleeting. The novelty will be temporary.

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The fascination will soon wear off. What then?

But no, the novelty will be perennial if you hold up your end. The boys won't tire of it if you constantly rub in the spirit of loyalty and the pride of organization.

Which word is a dangerous one. Organization is a very happy performance if it means the right thing. But the modern "organized" class may be a good deal of a fizzle. Everybody gets an office. That sounds good as a starter. Everybody has something to do. That sounds fascinating. But some of the duties are very meagre, and the boys know it. The collection taker gets a bit tired about the third Sunday. Even the king business ceases to charm. The president's proud honors bag at the knees before long. And the joy of handing out the hymn books and gathering up the lesson papers loses its pith and becomes an irksome duty by the time the second month rolls round.

This is a little sidelight on organization. It need not worry you if you think differently or if your discoveries are not like unto

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mine. I insert it parenthetically for the comfort of those who have found the plan does not succeed. They have been told to set their boys doing something, to give each a duty, to form committees and assign work, and that thereupon all will be serene and lovely as a summer sea.

Between you and me it is not true. It is an artificial sort of a remedy for restlessness. We all of us enjoy kinging it and queening it for a brief hour. But when our loyal servitors do not bow as low or as often as our royal highnesses think they ought to, we fret a little. The servitors fret still more. They want to be king and queen too. There are not enough thrones to go round. The supply of crowns and scepters runs short.

The organized class invariably makes a brilliant and glowing beginning. Invariably, I say. I have never known it to fail. The time of its fizzling end varies. Sometimes the collapse comes the second week. Again in some important instances it may be postponed well on into the next year.

So when I say organization I am think-

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ing of something different. I mean the organization of the mass into a compact form and into a visible army. If the army numbers two dozen, it is easier to handle than if it has half as many. An army of four dozen may be easier still.

Here then you have your walled in Sunday School class of two dozen or even four dozen boys, whose ages range presumably from 14 to 17, and who may have come because they had to, but who are going to stay because they like to.

THE TEACHER

Now the teacher of this class is a very important personage. But not necessarily a very erudite or distinguished one. Woodrow Wilson has written some very able treatises on the Sunday School. But Woodrow, I much fear, would be at a loss as a leader of this wriggling mass. The professor of political economy in your town university may be the cleverest man in all the countryside. Your newspaper may say so. His text books prove it. But he might quail and faint in the presence of this lusty

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throng. Or, if he had boldness enough to sail right in and plunge straight ahead, the throng might cease to be lusty, and on the second Sunday there would be no throng at all.

I have no prejudice against either Mr. Wilson or your professor of political economy. But I seek to point out that erudition is not all, nor indeed the principal thing.

Plant before your class a story teller, or an athletic expert, or one who reads both newspaper and Bible and can dovetail the truths of each in such a way as boys can understand. He may ignore all the laws of polite society. He may be lacking in the grace of polished diction. He may mix his metaphors sadly and butcher his adverbs mercilessly. But your gang won't mind that, if you have carefully excluded the sophomoric high school boy with his supercilious disdain of things uncouth. Which sophomoric one and all his sort, by the way, have no business in this new-fangled class of ours.

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CHAPTER VII

THE METHOD

How the teaching is to be done must depend much on circumstances. I can see no good reason why it should not be an uninterrupted lecture if that seems the best way of holding attention. I know that this lecture method is much deprecated in some learned quarters. But it seems to have been the rather successful fashion of churches through a good many centuries. When you go to church of a Sunday morning you go prepared to listen for twenty minutes or more without talking back. If the method is good for you and if you go forth edified, I do not see why it should be despised for your young protégés.

It might be explained, of course, that there is much difference between a church and a Sunday School, and that the method of one is not to be adopted as the method

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of the other. But this is only partially true. This average boy that we are talking about is not much of a churchgoer. When he does go he hardly hearkens to the sermon. It is too deep for him; he cannot wade into it. But he may listen interestedly to a lay sermon which comes down to his level and foregoes the foreign language of the pulpit for the colloquialism of the street.

But the school, you are told, is not a place for preaching, but for teaching. So it is. But the Monday school and the Sunday School set out to teach very different things. They should teach them therefore in very different ways. On Monday the boy is taught that two and two make four, and that Paris on the Seine is the capital of France. Further, that things equal to the same thing are equal to one another. Moreover that you spell receive with an e-i, but that siege must be spelled with an i-e.

Now these are facts which the boy must get into his head. He is bidden to remember them. He is expected to study over them. If he neglects his study and if he fails of his memory, there is no promotion

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when the reckoning day comes. He fails to pass his grade. He is thrown on the educational junk pile. Or he must begin all over again.

There is no analogy between this Monday school and your Sunday School. You have not herded all these average boys together to teach them facts; that Hosea comes before Micah; that there are thirty-four chapters in Deuteronomy and a good three dozen in Numbers; that the mother of Zebedee's children had no name so far as the Scriptures relate; and that there were twelve disciples whose names were "as follows."

You have not herded your average boys into this cubbyhole of a corner room for any such purposes, I say. At least I ardently hope you haven't. It is not this that is going to make or mar the average boy's life. It is not this that is going to mold him into a sinner or a saint. It is not this that will save or lose his soul.

But there are scriptural facts that you may set forth before him which he will drink in thirstily, and which he will never

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forget. A shepherd boy's slaying of a giant, for instance; a host passing through a sea dry-shod; a prison door open of a sudden and its prisoner set free; and along with these stirring facts some notion of their modern application, some hint as to their everyday meaning, some appeal to the listener's loyalty, some arousal to heroic service.

Perhaps, to be concrete—and a boy's Sunday School lesson is of little use unless it be concrete; vague abstractions have no meaning for the typical boy; and even a tale of Old Testament devotion or New Testament heroism is pointless unless there be modern analogy and a latter day interpretation—you can cite such thrilling facts as these, clipped from a current newspaper and pregnant with meaning to the twentieth century boy:

Arthur E. Wilson, of the Giants, says: "My roommate and I used to read our Bibles every night before I came to New York, and I still read it a great deal. The example of Christ helps to make a man manly. My mother is my best friend and

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I owe everything to her training and influence."

James P. Archer, of the Cubs: "No ball player can succeed unless he lives a clean life. He must avoid booze and wild living and reverence God. I am a member of the church and am not ashamed of it."

Arthur Fletcher, of the Giants: "Base ball is a good, clean game and calls for good, clean men to play it. If there is any place where the religious life can help a man it is right here on the diamond."

Max G. Carey, of the Pirates: "I have not found my religion a hindrance in base ball. Every young man ought to belong to some church."

Marty J. O'Toole, a Pirate: "No young man can afford to be without religion."

Fred C. Snodgrass, a Giant: "It is my conviction that no man can come to his highest possibilities in the game of base ball except he lives a good, clean life, one that is in harmony with the laws of health and the dictates of a sound morality."

Otis Crandall, of the Giants: "Only the man of clean, temperate life has any place

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in the game, and one of the other sort is doomed."

Joe Tinker, formerly of the Cubs, says: "I owe my success to being good to my mother and following her teachings. He is not much of a man who will not do this. I believe in prayer and have never forgotten to pray as my mother taught me. I ask for guidance regularly and thank God for help. I never went to bed at night without saying my prayers and asking protection for my wife and babies."

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

If you can bring out your lessons of heroism better by the conversational method, by a question and answer formula, by going round the class as if it were the multiplication table, follow your plan and be happy in it. I believe that most teachers will find it best to be cautious. The boy most eager to answer may be the one who needs the lesson least. The most persistent talker back will talk for talk's sake. The boy with the most agile memory will spoil things for the rest. The dull boy, the slow

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boy, the indifferent boy will be left far behind. His spirit will be crushed. The lesson for him will have been lost.

Especially if he dislikes school, as is the habit of many working boys. School days for them are past and over, and they are glad of it. They read badly and they are ashamed to show it. Their less polite but more alert companions will titter over their slowness and their mistaken pronunciation. The Bible to them is a puzzle. They have not learned a deftness of research. They are likely to locate Romans among the minor prophets. And an XCIV would never in the world spell 94 to them.

That it is desirable to teach a boy to locate Romans aright I willingly concede. That a boy ought to be able to find a verse in the twinkling of an eye I won't deny. But if you are going to make this the test and this the manner and this the policy of your new-fangled Sunday School class, it will be a small class after the opening Sunday. And a quite exclusive class thenceforth.

The average boy won't be there at all.

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You will have driven him out by expecting too much of him. You will have hindered your own good work by your adherence to custom and by your ultra-conventionalism. Have respect for the crude education of your boys, and you will do better. Be duly grateful for the fact that they are boys, and you will be wiser. Keep in mind the difference between the school of Sunday and that of Monday. In the day school it is mostly facts that they seek to teach. In the school of Sunday it should be principles and morals.

There may be stories there galore. But every story has its own intensely practical meaning. And these boys will grasp the meaning a good deal quicker than you expect if you bring it before them in the right way. Which is to say, in the way the boy likes.

GOOD THINGS TO AVOID

A boy does not like to be asked whether he has studied his lesson at home. He does not like to be quizzed before the other boys about his own personal virtues or vices. He

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does not like to have his ignorance exposed or held up to ridicule. He does not like to run the risk of a flunk and invite the possibility of a scolding. If he is going to be scolded because he cannot say his golden text; if he is to be amiably derided because he cannot recite his commandments; if he is to be called, even by polite suggestion, a stupid for failure to enumerate the books of the Pentateuch, then he is going to drift away from the Sunday School and be hard to coax back.

In this new-fangled class it will be well to steer clear of these rocks of convention. Crowd into your precious minutes all the helpful teaching about a manly Christianity that you can muster, not scorning bits from the newspaper, lessons from every day life, chat from the sporting weekly or an illustration from current fiction. Only be sure you are giving the boy what interests him. And be certain that that thing that interests him carries with it some moral which he will take back home, which he will remember in the shop, which won't be drowned out of his busy brain by the crash-

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ing noise of the factory's machinery, which even the rough talk of the boys on the corner and their genial scorn of religion and the church will not wholly obliterate or efface.

When the superintendent drops in and asks how many of your boys can recite the golden texts for the quarter you need not get red in the face at his shocked discovery that there is not a single one. And when the parson passes by on his tour of inspection, and lays his hand upon Bill's towsled locks, and asks Willie to recite the books of the Bible, you need not share William's dread alarm. You can answer back for the speechless boy with calm and satisfied demeanor. For you may happen to know that, with all his darkened understanding of the biblical books, Billy has been engaged this last week in a more terrific moral warfare than the good doctor has the remotest idea of. And that rattlepate acquaintance with a formal Sunday School rigmarole would have proved a vain weapon for safety in the kind of battles that rough boy of yours had to fight.

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Yours is a new-fangled class, you will recall, and you are doing things in a new-fangled way. Learning texts is highly desirable and reciting the names of books is a brave feat of memory. But you are trying to teach principles, not words. You are trying to feed imaginations, not memories. Yours is not a spectacular effort. You are seeking to teach and to hold the boys. You are endeavoring to make strong, clean men of them. Maybe you will succeed, what though not one of all can locate Ecclesiastes or pronounce it; and none at all can explain the meaning or the place of the apocalypse.

How you will teach the boys huddled together in this little shut off corner must depend much upon circumstances, upon the teacher, and upon the boys. But you can hardly look for much home study. You cannot fairly ask these boys to come lugging to class a ponderous Bible. You cannot expect even in reviewing them to find that they have a consecutive idea of the history of things, a definite notion of chronology, or a due understanding of places and times.

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They may get Daniel hopelessly mixed with Ty Cobb. They may imagine George Washington, who prayed at Valley Forge, and Elijah, who prayed at Horeb, were friends and brothers. They may, as more than one boy of my acquaintance has done, suppose that the hero of Santiago was the man who slaughtered a thousand with the jawbone of an ass. My advice to you is that you had better not expect aught but such confusion. You may be personally disappointed if you go reviewing things to find such a mental mixture of facts and fancies. Worse than your own disappointment will be the exploitation of the boy's ignorance. Go questioning, and you will lead to embarrassment. The boy who knows will laugh at the boy who doesn't know.

Leave your questions out, is my advice. Skip the reviews. Pass over the tests. Hold no examinations. Tell the same stories often, perhaps. Give them a new turn and a fresh touch. Drive them home by their frequent repetition. What you are after is the lesson of Daniel's faith, the meaning of Samson's weakness, the moral of Peter's

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wavering loyalty, the stimulus of Elijah's incessant prayer.

Find the method of teaching that the boys like best, and follow it. Talk to them often of loyalty. Plead with them over and again for a practical Christianity. Hold up before them ever the example of a strong and unflinching Christ. Bring them by a thousand examples in Bible, in history, in the life of men to-day, to believe in prayer. Teach them to pray.

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CHAPTER VIII

PRAYING

SUNDAY School may not be the best place for doing this. It is a good place for many things. But lessons in prayer may best be given in a prayer meeting for boys. Though you had better not call it so.

I have known many boys who have believed in prayer and have not been a bit ashamed to say so or to pray before dozens of their fellows. But I have never heard them speak of their prayer meeting. There is a good deal in a name. One must be careful. And right here is a worthy matter for care.

The man who discovered that the boy is a religious animal may or may not be entirely correct. This fact is certain, that the average boy is not going to resent the saying of prayers en masse, or not going to shun a meeting for prayer, or worry his way through it in ennuied restlessness, or watch

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the clock hungrily for the minute of dismissal, if it be a real meeting for real boys, and if there are plenty of real boys there to keep this average boy company.

He won't object to the praying at all. If, that is, the praying be none too long or too verbose or too deep or dignified. Dr. Grenfell is a great big boy. One of the cheeriest passages I have ever come across in any of his delightful writings is his confession of his impatience over a prayer period too long. He believes in ejaculatory prayer. His own praying is of the short-sentence sort. He would rather be doing something than turgidly and formally praying over the doing of it. And yet I dare say Dr. Grenfell never began any one of all the multitudinous good things that he has done without praying about it.

This is the spirit of the average boy when he finds it out. He prays over base ball and camp and fishing trips and bowling contests with just as much fervor as Elijah prayed for rain. Very briefly, with no set phrases, without long words, and with no thying or thouing or dosting or didsting.

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BY ANY OTHER NAME

The best way to arouse this latent prayer habit is to start a prayer meeting for the boys and to call it by almost any other name. There you will find in a short while that practically all of your boys are ready to take part without embarrassment or forwardness, without urging, without in fact waiting to be invited.

They will be wounded and offended if you pass them by. When once the pace is set and the ice is broken they will rush into the prayer habit pellmell. I have at this moment before my eye pictures of doleful and distressed countenances belonging to boys of the big, strong, athletic 17-year-old type, doleful because their names had been unintentionally omitted from the list of those eligible to pray at the weekly meeting. All the other fellows were on the list. Their exclusion seemed to them as pitiful as that of the Peri locked out of Paradise.

And yet they were not boys fond of talky-talk, or such as had made speeches in

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public, or the kind that like to show off. They just wanted to be admitted to all the rights and privileges of their companions. And they regarded the prayer privilege, coming round every six or eight weeks, when they were to be permitted to utter a prayer about a quarter of a minute long, as a right which none should dispute or take away.

The method of this meeting is very simple. You will discuss it first with your Sunday School class. Though discussing it at any length may not be wise. You had better do most of the discussing yourself, allowing no room for unfavorable comment or unpleasant rejoinder. You had better announce it. And if there are other boys in your Sunday School, neither too little nor too big, you had better invite them to meet with you, to make a crowd.

The hour before the evening service is probably the best time of the day. It is hardly likely that all the boys in your class are faithful attendants at the evening service. But you will find them easy to gather together soon after their Sunday supper. They may go from your boys' meeting into

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the evening church. Whether they do or not will depend a good deal upon circumstances; the chief circumstance being the nature of the man in the pulpit and his interest in boyhood. Anyway you are not likely to have much difficulty in corralling the boys for an hour before church begins.

THE MISSING BOYS

This is the usual hour for young people's meeting. But in many churches I have known it would be easier to find a needle in a hay stack than to find a crowd of average boys in the young people's service. With all the admirableness of the Christian Endeavor system, I constantly wonder why there is such a gap left unfilled.

The older young people of the prayer meeting age—those who are real students of the Bible and who like to exchange ideas upon their favorite passages and to utter hearty, earnest, well phrased prayers in each other's company for the uplift of themselves and all the world—find in the average young people's meeting a great source of

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consolation and a means of growth. It is curious, though, how few of such there be; how in a church with an enrolled membership of a thousand souls there are not likely to be fifty active Endeavorers. And on the night you drop in nearly twenty-five of these have been kept away by "providential reasons." The remainder are of questionable age. If you had not been informed by the church bulletin that it was a young people's meeting you would never have guessed it. If perchance there is a boy there you, the friend of boys, halt waveringly between two moods; whether to be heartily thankful or profoundly pitiful.

Such a helpful, ennobling institution is the Christian Endeavor Society to those who cling to it and love it, and so obviously educative is the junior society, whose age limit is sixteen years and where there is almost never a boy beyond thirteen, that you cannot help regretting and wondering over the absence of something in between. The average boy is not going to be content in the Junior Endeavor after he reaches a certain age. It is too girlish and too kiddish

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for him. Nor is he going to be at home in the gathering of mature persons who constitute the bulk of the membership of the older society. There are some boys in both these organizations. The average boy is conspicuously absent from each. There is no middle ground for him to hold, or no intermediate state for him to enter.

If you ask the minister why, he will tell you sorrowfully that it is because the boys won't come. He deeply deplores their early withdrawal from the junior organization, if perchance they ever belonged to it. He solemnly berates them for failing to attend the senior body. He might, if he saw the point, have the liveliest meeting of all right in his own church fold, of a fourteen to seventeen-year-old crowd singing to raise the roof, hearkening to an address in almost painful silence, praying with a vigor and earnestness that would amaze and dumfound him.

A GOOD PLACE TO LEARN

It is at a meeting such as this that boys can learn how to pray. And meetings such

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as this are by no means impracticable. They would succeed almost anywhere. For between the Scylla of the older young people's dignified service and the Charybdis of the over-girled junior society there is ample room for a real boys' meeting conducted by the boys, with all girls barred out, with not a woman round, with no kid brothers there, and with not a man above twenty, unless he is known to be thoroughly sympathetic and heartily with the gang.

Simplicity itself, I have said. Here is the method: Appoint a boy to lead. Let him select the hymns. The Bible passage will not be one that requires much fumbling and research. It will be consecutive. Let the book of Luke, for instance, be read through chapter by chapter. Let every boy have his Bible or his Testament, or simpler still, his two-cent Gospel of Luke, just the right size for a boy's pocket. A chapter is too long for an evening's reading. Let it be divided into sections of twenty verses or thereabouts. The leader reads one verse. The boys respond with the next.

The leader announces his hymns. He

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conducts the Bible reading. Now it is his business to say a prayer.

He will do it easily enough after the start is made. It will all be over in a few short seconds. All will join then in the Lord's prayer. And the meeting is now well under way.

The leader introduces the speaker, who may be some man from outside; someone who has been invited to talk on some practical religious theme. The right speaker can be found if a diligent search is made; somebody with fresh views and boyish enthusiasm and up-to-date illustrations. When he is done, at the end of his ten minutes—which have been usually a very quiet ten minutes, with attention that never flags nor weakens—there is a round of hand clapping. Which is not directly in accordance with the method of the ordinary Christian Endeavor Society, but which in a boys' meeting is not to be deprecated or discountenanced. It is a preliminary to the most important feature of the meeting; which is prayers by a squad of boys as pre-arranged.

To announce that "the meeting is now

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open for anyone who desires to speak or pray" is all very well in a dignified Senior Endeavor meeting. It is all out of place in such a meeting as this. The wrong boy would be sure to speak and to pray; the forward, pushing, insincere boy. You have your squads fixed weeks in advance. The leader reads the names of the squad of four or six or eight boys who are appointed to pray. They respond with alacrity. Each prayer is a little shorter than the one that went before. And each of the prayers perhaps repeats what has been said before. But they pray sincerely and reverently. They pray eagerly and gladly. They pray, I happen to believe, successfully. For the effectual, fervent prayer of an upright boy—even of just a tolerably upright boy—availeth much.

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CHAPTER IX

TALKING IN MEETING

THERE is a psychology of prayer which a mere layman must not undertake to interpret, much less define. But that it is good for boys to pray together, and that praying together is one of the best means of teaching them to pray apart and alone, is a fact well understood by those who have practiced it.

Talking out in meeting is not worthy of being commended in itself. Indeed in a certain type of boy it is a habit to be deprecated, even deplored. There is an unwholesome priggishness about the habit of speaking often in meeting. Far be it from me to assume that this much speaking is a thing to be sought after, and that its attainment marks the acme of juvenile goodness.

A boy who speaks in meeting or who

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makes a prayer there, and who does not follow it up with some more practical devotion—turning words into deeds, making his works the equal of his words—is a poor sort, who will have little standing among his fellows. A genuine boy despises a hypocrite. And the sham piety of an exhorter who is given to many words and few deeds gets scant respect from the boys who are compelled by force of circumstances to listen to him.

But the brief, impromptu, unelaborated prayers of a bunch of boys herded together in a common cause, with interests alike, with similar hopes, with a kindred spirit and a huge sense of the goodness of togetherness, is different. There is no proud teacher there to applaud if they do well. There is no silly girl to giggle if they break down. There is no superior person to smile inwardly over a poor, lisping, stammering tongue. There is no one except just the "fellows"; and maybe one or two utterly sympathetic adults.

It is good then to be there and to be seeking together for some invisible power;

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a strength and a help and an uplift which they had never perhaps felt the need of before, or, having felt it, had never known how to get at it or work it out.

The average boy does not say his prayers. He has stopped it when he entered his early teens. The time of his stoppage may vary from eleven on to fourteen. But for the most part the stoppage has been absolute and evidently final. The prayers of his childhood have gradually appeared to him as kiddish. The habit of kneeling down by his bedside has been relegated to a far off past. When he was a child he prayed as a child, but now that he has become a man—of thirteen or thereabouts—he has put away such childish things. Perhaps he will return to them some day in his old age, he may tell himself; but now your juvenile Gallio cares for none of these things.

If this is the experience of one boy, I believe it is the experience of thousands of them. It takes some strong conviction to bring them back into the habit of infancy. This boys' meeting will open up the way.

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It will make the way quite easy. Indeed it will make the way almost inevitable, and any other way seem quite impossible.

Of ordinary folk, perhaps, there are a thousand given to private devotions to one who will make a public prayer. It is through their private prayer that most persons learn to pray in public. In the case of the average boy this rule may be almost reversed. The boy learns to pray with other boys in his semi-public meeting. It comes easy because of the gang instinct, and because all the others are doing it. Presently he discovers the value and the need of it. And thereupon, with a little cordial advice and a little gentle reminder, he inserts it into the program of his daily personal life. It is a fixed habit after that which long drawn out years may hardly efface.

But the prayers must be for such things as the boy wants. Most boys do not recognize their need of saving grace and eternal salvation. If they use these phrases they are apt to grate harshly upon a thoughtful listener's ear, because, knowing the boy, he

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does not believe that the appeal for these particular things comes from the heart. They sound too much like the prayer book. They smack too much of the conventional.

When a boy prays for his basket ball team; when he prays that the players be kept from "chewing" at the referee; when he prays that the sun shine on the day of his next foot ball game, and that no one shall get very badly hurt; when he prays that the minstrel show "go fine" and that there be a crowded house, the boy is essentially asking for the things he wants. His prayer is earnest and sincere, even if not in its strict sense spiritual.

The boy must be taught not to limit his aspirations to mere material things. And yet these things are not merely material either. The boy regards the minstrel show as a means of grace. He looks upon a swift, clean foot ball game as a moral agency. He feels that playing brilliantly at basket ball and routing the heathen foe is achieving the same sort of glorious conquest as the Hebrew hosts', who used to slay

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their tens of thousands. When victory comes he recognizes its source. He is thankful for it in his boyish way. He believes it came because his team stood together for the good of the crowd; because they sank self and worked for the glory of the whole. Most especially because they prayed for it.

Here is the evidence of that mysterious psychology of prayer which, I repeat, no mere layman—and perhaps no highly schooled doctor of divinity—can describe or define. It is like the united prayer before battle, the full voiced prayer in a day of wide desolation, the chorused prayer of those who are thrilled with a real need and who are mightily in earnest in their seeking for an answer.

If they can thus throw heart and soul and voice into a prayer for help upon their base ball diamond or their foot ball grid-iron, in their races, their "shows," their athletic bouts, is not this palpably a sure way to lead them into prayer for soul help and heart balm and that cure of sin which ought to be the goal of every fervent petitioner?

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WANTS VERSUS NEEDS

It has been so, I suppose, in many cases. The boy has prayed for what he wanted. Thus he has learned to pray for what he needed. He has recognized then that his needs were more important than his wants. He has come gradually to the discovery that his own idea of his needs was not nearly as wise as Another's; but that whether he prayed wisely or foolishly, still there was Another that cared to have him pray at all, and that never, even to his most foolish prayer, turned a deaf or an impatient ear.

Now the prayer feature of these prayer meetings—which, I repeat, we do not call prayer meetings—is brief enough. Three minutes of prayer, I dare say, will be the aggregate total out of the whole hour spent together. There will be a good deal of singing of such hymns as boys like, and which they will shout out with full volume. There will be a brief prayer or two in concert. There will be perhaps the reading or reciting together of the ten commandments,

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with a musical refrain. And then there will be the talk, which can range from ten minutes to twenty, according to the interest and the topic and the grace of the speaker.

There need be no further diversion. To announce a boys' meeting sensationally or spectacularly has always seemed to me a futile performance. To add to the announcement that there is to be "special singing" seems fairly absurd. What does the average boy care for a high flown anthem or for a temperamental solo? An orchestra will not bring him. And a grand opera aria will bore him.

True, if you go into the realm of acrobatics and introduce a tight rope walker or a balloon ascension or a cake walk, probably the boys will flock to your meeting. Moving pictures will lure them too. So perhaps may chemical experiments. Cake and ice cream will fetch them sure.

But these trumpery means of gathering an audience had better be beneath your dignity. Such an audience as they gather is hardly worth the gathering. The boys are restless as soon as the show is over.

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They perceive the nature of your bait. They know what you are up to. And after they have nibbled a little round the hook, they are sick and tired of it all and want to get out.

Such piscatorial methods may serve a purpose once in a long while. But usually it is a poor sort of a purpose and a highly unsuccessful fishing trip. It is like toiling all day and catching nothing. Yet there is draught of fishes near at hand that can be duly landed by saner means and wiser fishermen.

If your boys get the fervor of the thing and catch the loyalty fever they are not going to thirst for "special music" or hunger for ice cream or demand wire walking or clamor after a chemical show. They are not going to insist on a speaker who tells funny stories and makes a clown of himself. They are not going to demand ginger and spice and novelty and sensation.

They will come expecting plain, straight fare. And they will be satisfied if you give it to them. Indeed they may be dissatisfied with anything else. They may make bold

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to tell you so. And boys are merciless critics.

They are very likely to prefer such fare as I have outlined above, fifty-two Sundays of the year, with their own songs and their own prayers and their own spirit of friendship and good will; a speaker who talks to them directly without frills or furbelows, without philosophy or poetry, without sanctimony or cant, but with a knowledge of his audience and a keen desire to be one of them.

This is no new discovery, though perhaps it's rarely applied. It used to be a rule of the old Boys' Brigade, when that excellent organization was in its heyday, that the boy must be a Sunday School goer. He could not wear a uniform or parade with the crowd unless he had a tolerable Sunday School record. This had the effect of bringing ambitious young soldiers into the fold. They came perhaps with some reluctance. They felt as if they were doing a very generous and perhaps quite unnecessary deed. They felt as if their attendance in itself was a great contribution to the

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Brigade cause, and as if they deserved a crown of life for their acquiescence in the Brigade rules.

This was only at the beginning. A little later it was found that the Bible meeting attendance was steadier than attendance at drill; that the most careless of the young soldiers were most regular in their Sunday attendance; that the religious feature was not a mere perfunctory affair, but more enthusiastic and whole-souled than the military; and that the soul of the Brigade was in fact concentred right there in the meeting for devotion or Bible study.

A good many Brigade workers have made this discovery for themselves. And a very useful discovery it is. If wooden guns and toy sabres are merely a method of bribery; if the little church gymnasiums and the scout uniforms are just a way of luring the boy; if he must give in return for these reluctant attention to religious duty; if he must hand over compulsory attendance upon some despised meeting or other because perchance the church has given him a soldier suit or a base ball bat

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or a week in camp or an ice cream treat—it's a poor sort of a swap, and the usefulness to the boy will be meagre. He will have in his heart a cheap opinion of that church and its method. And the zest of service and the joy of loyalty will be utter strangers to him.

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CHAPTER X

ALL THE WEEK THROUGH

THE gang that meets only on Sunday is lacking in solidarity. It is solidarity that you need to make things go. There must be other times and other events. What they are and how they are to be fitted in and where they are to occur will tax your ingenuity. But it will all be in a worthy cause. Your ingenuity could not be engaged in more helpful pursuit.

It seems to me that the best test of a good work for boys is its continuity. When you go investigating forms of boys' work this is a good test question to apply. True, the boy is always growing, and it is fair to suppose that what he will like at twelve he may not care for at fourteen. And that at sixteen he may desire something utterly different. On this account we may persuade ourselves that, as the boy's tastes shift so frequently, we must shift methods and

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adopt something new every year or two. Or sometimes twice or thrice a year. If this seems to indicate fickleness we will blame it on the boy. We will argue that he is forever outgrowing and outwearing his present suit of clothes and we must be forever buying him new ones with new cut and new style and new frills. We must therefore change our methods of boys' work just as frequently.

This is a lame sort of excuse and not a bit tenable when one looks deep into the matter. Turning spears into pruning hooks and beating swords into ploughshares is reasonable business. But buying soldierly epaulettes in March and discarding them for knightly paraphernalia in October, and purchasing scout accoutrements in the early spring and relapsing into dramatics and debates in the late summer is not good for the worker or for the boys.

Yet this tossing away of one method for another is a very common practice. Many a boy worker blames the method and the boy when he ought to be blaming himself. It is a good deal better to adopt one plan

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and to stick to it even through great tribulation than to adopt half a dozen and abandon them all. There is room here for practical application of the good old doctrine of the perseverance of the saints.

Boys are not as fickle as we imagine. You set boys of ten years old playing base ball. They are scarcely ready to stop even when the dinner bell rings. You set boys of twenty playing at the same fascinating game, and they are deaf to dinner bells. The man of thirty or forty or fifty goes to a ball game, to look on perhaps, not to play. There will be no consideration of dinner at all if it is a world championship game. Mere dinner is stuff and nonsense when the score is a tie and the bases are filled.

That is what I mean by continuity of interest. You must enlarge your diamond and harden your ball and level your outfield and change a few minor details when your ten-year-old boy becomes twenty. But it is the same old game of base ball. And the ten-year lad and the sixty-year grandfather are equally base ball crazy.

Now this principle ought to apply to

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boys' work in general. The method of work should have about it some durable qualities. If the boys soon tire of it, there is something wrong. To throw it overboard and adopt something new may in some cases be reasonable. But there is danger in it. Better choose the right work at the outset and stick to it.

It is for this reason that athletics seem to be the best form of activity. Men and boys turn to the sporting pages as a duck seeks the water. It's the most—or the only—interesting part of the newspapers. The records of the runners, the results of the wrestling bouts, the scores of the ball games, the achievements of eminent ones on the gridiron and in the basket ball cage and on the cinder track, make hearty appeal to myriads of boys of all ages, including sires and grandsires.

There is continuity here. The boy who is interested in sports at fifteen is going to be no less interested at twenty-five. The game that appeals to him in his knicker-bocker state is going to make just as strong an appeal in his older age, after his limbs

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have grown stiff and his eyesight dull and when, instead of running the bases fleetly and agilely, he can but sit on the bleachers and yell.

Thus when I suggest all-the-week activities I harp upon athletics as the easiest way to get the boy and hold him. I would not disparage other forms of boyhood training. It is athletics which seem to me to have the strongest pull, the tightest grip, the most universal appeal and the most abiding interest.

Activities that are short-lived seem scarcely worth the effort. Of many a well meaning boys' work the observing poet might remark: "If so soon 'twas to be done for I wonder what it was begun for." Moreover your activity must make its appeal to all or nearly all of your gang. Having a gang you must adopt means and measures which will allure not only an individual here and there, but a mass of individuals; every individual in fact; the whole compact assemblage.

If you have a gang of forty it is not wise or well to select the best nine of them

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for a base ball team and let it represent the crowd while the rest follow it round and root. It is a good deal better to make of your forty, four base ball teams, dividing them up as ingeniously as you can, not letting all the strong players play together, but encouraging the strong to help the weak and encouraging the weak to make themselves strong.

A base ball league conducted throughout the summer on this principle may strike its snags, but it will do a world of good. All of the boys will be interested in it and all will stick, if there is enough altruism to be patient with the errors of the less skilful, and enough closeness of scoring to make the race really exciting.

Basket ball leagues may be even more enduring and useful. With league games played every Friday night, let us say, and four or more teams in your league you can prolong your season for a full half year. Twenty-six games for every team can be the requirement, and into all of those twenty-six your players will enter with zest and enthusiasm. There is

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continuity for you. And you will find your players talking most of the summer about the resumption of the league in the early fall. And you will find sundry of your teams, starting at the average age of fourteen, perhaps, continuing their same line-up till they are eighteen or twenty, playing league games year after year, and growing meanwhile in stature, in skill and in favor, let us hope, with both God and the fans.

Perhaps your teams may be uniformed by means of sundry saving and rigid economy. The uniforms will not be tossed into the garret when the season is ended or in the season's midst. The uniforms may be worn persistently through a series of years; by the same boys till they outgrow them, by younger brothers and zealous neighbors subsequently. I have among my acquaintance a team of small boys who are revelling in the glories of base ball shirts and trousers—caps and stockings have had to be renewed—that were first worn by boys who are now fathers. The ball suits were new the year after the war. Not the Rebel-

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lion, true, but the Spanish-American war, which was seventeen years ago. These base ball suits have done service then for sixteen successive seasons. What do you think of the continuity of that?

For some forms of athletics the equipment must be rather elaborate. For instance, good base balls for big boys cost pretty nearly a dollar each. Suits are costly and good grounds are not always easy to obtain. For basket ball there must be a fair sized hall, and this in some cases is almost impossible.

But take still simpler athletic forms. You can jump without apparatus. You can sprint without paraphernalia; and, best of all, there is distance running. Boys of town and country alike ought to be reachable by this means. Cross country runs of from three to five miles are good and healthy and lively and popular among all types of boys. Often the slender, unathletic lad who has never thought of running, but who falls in with the gang and makes his try at it, finds that he is one of the fleetest of the lot. He is encouraged then to train and to labor.

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He becomes all of a sudden, to his surprised delight, a real athlete. And, unskilled in some of the other forms of athletics, he develops, to his intense gratification, into one of the best runners of all.

A dozen or a score of boys, running along country roads or through city streets in the twilight of a summer day, or even among the boisterous blasts of a mid-winter gale, is a goodly sight to see, if the observer has common sense and vision. It is not just child's play. It is not a tempting of Providence. It suggests a practical means of catching and holding and energizing a raft of boys.

Shower baths are cheap and practicable. And when the runners come back from their cross country flight dripping with perspiration, panting with eagerness, garrulous with boyish prattle, the shower is good for mind and body. And in the cooling deluge of it there is an access of loyalty and an uplift of spirit which no wise looker on can possibly ignore.

And here again is continuity. The boy who starts running at twelve may be just

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as brisk and eager over it at seventeen. It is the least inexpensive of all activities. All that is needed is a pair of stout legs. And even legs less sturdy may be trained to run well and to outstrip the rest, to the boy's moral profit and to the watchful worker's obvious satisfaction.

It is not easy to find a week-day scheme which will fit all cases and lure all boys. Athletics seem to me to suggest the easiest way. For in some form of athletics nearly every boy can join. And even the non-athletic boy can be roused to enthusiastic interest and earnest participation if he be coached and goaded and trained. Athletics is a good deal broader basis, upon which a much larger crowd of boys will stand, than most of the other schemes of boy culture—of which we hear much, but of which, in permanent results and continuing success, we see little.

A nature study class has its own difficulties and limitations. A few of the boys will be advanced geologists and enthusiastic botanists. The rest will weary of that sort of thing before they begin. The collec-

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tion of stamps and the search for specimens and relics present a similar obstacle.

The Boys' Brigade is less open to these objections. For a boy who imagines he cares nothing for military life may discover he cares a great deal for it after he has put his uniform on and started drilling.

The Y. M. C. A., with its great equipment, its large force of skilled officers, its united study of boy problems and its many material advantages, may seem to hold the key to the puzzle. Send all your boys to the Y. M. C. A. for their training, is sound and wholesome advice. The Y. M. C. A., with its gymnasiums, its industrial classes, its clubs and hikes and camps, with its liberal support from the public and its ample opportunities to do whatever it wants to do—I am thinking now of the Y. M. C. A. in the typical big town or city—is an ideal spot for the boy that can afford it.

Most boys can't. But a live church may be able to afford it for them. If there is in the church a man ready to spend $500 a year for the good of the church's boys, it could perhaps be spent in no better way than in

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the purchase of a hundred membership tickets at $5 each for the boys that we are here talking about.

The church gymnasium is mostly a futile thing. It is too small to begin with. Only the little boys will tolerate it. It is too poorly ventilated, too stuffily constructed, too badly placed and too noisy withal. Many a good dollar has been wantonly wasted in the construction of a church gymnasium, wherein a little group of small boys has gathered now and then for listless, disorganized play. Far better would those boys be mingling with bigger, older, heartier boys in the great gymnasium of the Y. M. C. A. a couple of blocks down the street; there directed by men paid for that very purpose; men well trained, physically, intellectually and morally, to be the trainers and guides and friends of these very boys.

But it costs too much. The boys can't pay for it. Few churches can or will. But the church that would send a hundred boys to the local Y. M. C. A., and then keep its grip upon those boys, not leaving to the association all of the work, but backing it

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up with some such intramural methods as I have tried to outline, would be engaged in a very profitable man-making business. I have known this plan to be tried with considerable success.

However, in the average church this sort of proceeding would seem preposterous and impossible. We must look about then for some different plan. If there is in your town a well-established boys' club, the problem is simply solved. For these boys' clubs provide much which the Y. M. C. A. gives, but along more democratic lines and at much smaller cost. They charge the working boy approximately a dime a month; and there he is welcome to spend his every evening and a part of his leisure days, when work is slack or there's no job at all.

It is to fill in his evenings and to guard him against the multitudinous mischief of the streets that you are supposedly concerned. For you must realize that the best of teaching on a Sunday afternoon, and the heartiest of praying at an evening meeting, are not going to do their perfect work if the boy is left to his own devices, and the

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gang's, and incidentally the devil's, for the other six days.

You may suggest that your evening meeting, which has been previously outlined, should be transferred from a Sunday to an evening amid-week in order to offset some of the mischief of the secular days. But I beg of you do not do that. For some subtle reason hard to define the boys will be altogether amenable to a Sunday meeting, but will not respond well on a Tuesday or a Thursday. Sunday seems built for this very thing. The week-day evenings seem to the boy quite differently constructed. He has not a bit of scruple about carrying the Sunday spirit into his work and his play. But a weekly meeting for a distinctly religious purpose would not be heartily welcomed in the days that fall between a Monday and a Saturday. Such a meeting would not be impossible. But I believe it would be far less successful.

SOMETHING DOING

But there must be something doing. The boy must not be left to the ravages of

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the picture show six nights of the week. The filling of his leisure must not be dependent upon the allurements of the bill-boards and the "ads" in the newspaper. He must be given a chance to do something wholesome and boyish and energetic and decent. And the church folk who display their deep interest in his Sunday attendance and his Sunday behavior cannot fairly shirk the responsibility that is theirs during the rest of the week.

I will not go into this in further detail, for this is not what this book is written for. How to provide for the boy's week-day evenings after his ten or twelve hours of work in a factory is another matter. It is enough to realize that something must be done about it, and that the best of Sunday School classes and the most eager of evening meetings will be likely to falter and fail if the other days of the week be ignored.

Sunday marks the climax of the week, but it is by no means the whole week. It marks the summing up of the week that has gone and the beginning of the week that comes. But the ardent friend of boys must

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realize that every day is fraught with danger, and that every night is a time of peril. The church that does not consider the whereabouts of its wandering boys all the week through is a thoughtless and a reckless church.

The boys themselves, with due encouragement, are likely to do some organizing without waiting to be organized. They will take the initiative in forming ball teams, in projecting swimming parties, in talking up a camp. These projects call for little apparatus and are entirely practical. They deserve abetting and backing. If your group of boys be small, and if the boys' size be smaller, the project will spell disaster. But if they be many and big, and if they be wisely guided, these efforts of theirs will make for righteousness, and the solidarity of your Sunday gang will be greatly strengthened and amplified through the means of week-day diversions.

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CHAPTER XI

THE PROBLEM OF THE VILLAGE

THE mere absence of a big Y. M. C. A. or a spaciously housed boys' club need not hinder the carrying out of such a plan as I have briefly outlined. It is not the city boy whom it is the easiest to corral. Nor indeed is it the town boy who needs the corral the most. The destitution of the boy in the smaller town is pitiful to think upon. And the most pitiful part of it is that few people do think upon it and that the destitution is mostly unconsidered.

"Now, if we lived in a big town," the theorist may begin. But it is a poor beginning, and the end is just as pathetic. The boy in the village or the small town who works for wages has his yearning, his aspirations, his ideals, no less than the boy in the big town down the pike. He also has his leisure hours. He has his evenings when he is just as reluctant to "sit by the fire and spin" after ten hours in the factory

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as his metropolitan cousin; just as unwilling, too, to do domestic chores, from chopping the kindling to washing the dishes and minding the baby. He pines for something, he scarcely knows what. It is mostly for company. And he finds it.

At the village pool room probably; or on a tavern corner; or in the absence of these —and they are rarely absent even in a very sparse village—at the grocery store. Rarely absent, I say. For the children of this world are wiser than the children of light. The children of this world recognize the social instinct as the other children do not. Hence they buy a license to sell liquor and provide a resort; not so much for the quenching of thirst, as for the exchange of gossip and the promotion of comradeship. Hence they equip a store room with a green felt-covered table or two; not so much for the development of sport as to give the boys of the neighborhood a gathering place, where they may meet and swap stories and spend their pence for an occasional game and more frequent cigarettes and candy.

The pool room is the social centre of

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the ordinary village. That is where the boys naturally gravitate. You hunt for John, and where is John to be found? If he is not at work they will tell you he is "down at the pool room." What though John may not be a pool player at all, or given to any vicious habits, or a typical pool room loafer. He is simply seeking company. The pool room is the boys' club of the town. That is where John goes to meet the "fellows."

Unless, as I find here and there, the tavern keeper has made over his summer dance hall into a basket ball cage. In this event the pool room is temporarily deserted. But at one place or the other you will find John. If there is a basket ball game to engage in or look at up at the tavern's dance hall, there you are likely to find him playing away or rooting away for dear life. He is not a drinker, is John. He would probably be turned away as under age even if he desired to be. But after the custom of the game he may wash down his enthusiasm with a glass of ginger pop purchased at the amiable bar. He may get into the bar

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room habit thus, though he really means no ill. A village working boy must have some place to go of an evening.

Every village has its picture show nowadays. Which is another evidence of the wisdom of the children of this world. The village church meanwhile is dark from Sabbath eve to Sabbath dawn. And the school house is only lighted up on the occasion of the monthly lyceum.

Now here is a more fertile field and one that more needs cultivation than do the teeming wards of the larger cities, where you may comfortably argue that there are Y. M. C. A.'s and open school houses and much else to provide for the boy's evening leisure. The working boy in the smaller town may be just as readily herded in Sunday School and in Sunday meeting as any boys in the world. But if he is taught there every Sunday to be decent and straight and square, and then if he is dismissed not to be seen again or scarcely to be thought about till the following Sunday, there is cruelty in such indifference, a madness in such method.

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To gather together the boys of a village and organize them into a strong, numerous body should be much easier than a similar work in the huddled town. If the village can support a picture show and a pool room, if the tavern keeper is ingenious enough to heat and light his shed and make of it a profitable place for basket ball, why shouldn't the children of light take notice and do a little imitating?

Some musical moralist once discovered that it was a shame to let the devil have all the good songs. Happily the discovery has been made some use of, and the modern revival hymns are quite as gay and jaunty in their way as the raggedest ragtime. Boys do not resent modern hymnology. "Throw Out the Lifeline" is just about as good to them as "Row, row, row"; and the "Brewer's Big Horses" is quite as cheery as "When the Midnight Chew-Chew Leaves for Alabam." Why, then, should the devil be permitted to monopolize good games? Why not an ecclesiastical pool room? Why not scholastic basket ball?

An old barn would make an excellent

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foundation. An abandoned wagon shed would serve as a first-class beginning. And in climates where most of the year can be spent outdoors basket ball goals and volley ball courts could be kept going under a wise leader's auspices most of the year round.

Given a leader with a zeal to gather the village lads together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and the lads will come flocking. All they want is sympathy and understanding and an intelligent program. They do not need much in the way of equipment. They do need leadership.

The church that imagines it senses the situation and proceeds to open a reading room is likely to fall short of the real solution. One out of ten of the village boys may choose to go tip-toeing into a quiet nook to poke over an encyclopedia or to delve into ancient history. The other nine-tenths are more restless and fidgety. Their ten hours in the factory has fired them with a zeal to do something lively. They want to talk and chatter and whistle, perhaps sing. The village pool room is to them a haven of bliss

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because there is warmth and light and comradeship there. Or even a street corner, where there is no warmth and which may be as dark as the grave, is a place of cheer and gayety if there is a little group of the other fellows to keep them company.

So the children of this world, in seeking to line their purse, do not open a reading room, but a pool room or a gymnastic resort. The boys delight in this, and pay out their meagre money gladly for it. Why shouldn't the church be sharing in the work? And why should the school house be darkened the while?

All of which is but fragmentary and casual. My aim is to tell what the church may do for its boys and what the boys will in turn do for the church. My story would be only half told—or but one-seventh told—if I indicated that all the church's work was to stop with Sunday night and that there was no more responsibility for it when Monday came, and when Tuesday and Wednesday followed.

The boys do not demand these things as a reward for their Sunday School going.

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They do not need to be coddled and coaxed by Monday gimcracks and by Wednesday lollipops. They will come gladly and gayly enough to the Sunday revels—for as real revelry they will regard their Sunday doings—of their own accord, for the sake of good humor, good company, good fellowship. But if on top of all the good advice, and inspired by the verve of militant songs, and touched by the real fervency of each other's prayers, they go out into a work-a-day world which gives them no recreation but such as can be found at questionable resorts, what will be the outcome of it all? A reasonable and thoughtful boy might almost ask: "What's the use?"

Thus do I plead for some filling in of the week's work. If Scoutcraft will satisfy, start your Boy Scouts going straightway. If a lodge or an order will do the work well, begin it now and keep at it. It is my own experience that boys will play basket ball six nights a week through all the winter long without wearying of it; that they will play pool incessantly if this is the fare offered them; that of athletics steadily pur-

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sued there is no weariness. And we must bear in mind that this boy of ours will be content, not with one filled-in evening only, but that every evening needs this filling.

The extraordinary boy will devote some of his evenings to study or to work. It is the ordinary boy I am talking about. And when supper is done in the case of the ordinary boy there is a dangerous hiatus between his folded napkin and his going to bed. There must be something doing then. Not for his coddling, coaxing and wheedling. He has been corralled, we assume, and is a willing victim. But for his moral health, for his continuing righteousness, for his shielding from the savage darts of a twentieth century devil. Which take their peculiar and favorite form in the village pool room, the country-side bar, the loungers' corner or a premature courtship whose end spells disaster.

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CHAPTER XII

THE SONGS OF A BOY

IT would seem scarcely worth while to discuss what a boy sings or ought to sing. And yet boys' singing is so hearty and spontaneous when they get agoing in a gang, and so obviously a means of grace, that a short chapter on boys' songs may not be amiss.

The modern vaudeville song is often atrocious in its sentiment. As to its music I have little to say. It is quite as good, I dare say, as the average Sunday School tune. It often has a good deal more of a lilt and a swing to it. I am not going to condemn the music hall tune and pine for a return to good old "Dundee," "Dennis" and "Hamburg."

The boy ought to be allowed to sing the tune he likes, which all the other fellows are singing, which the bands are playing, which his shop-mates are whistling and which, do what you may to prevent, he is hearing week after week at the "show."

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So much for the tune. The words are often so crude and the sentiment so vulgar that you will do well if you can to substitute something better. If you are a bit of a poetaster you may do this rather successfully. You will find after a little trying that the boys will take the music hall tune and your own particular words, which should be redolent with local color and interlarded with home-made jests, preferring their own gang's jingles to the vaudeville twaddle. If you cannot do this, you can eliminate the most objectionable songs from your camp fires and your assemblages. But you will not be wise if you try to edit out all the vaudeville songs whatsoever. There are some boys that like nothing better than to flock round the piano and sing what are termed "all the latest popular songs of the day." There is no use in barring these songs on the ground that your musical taste does not like their harmony or their raggedness. If, however, you find some of their sentiment unpleasant, and if you say so, even a rough and ready boy may see the point and rather fancy your censorship.

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As for hymns, the militant sort are what boys like and what are, moreover, best for them. There are a good many hymns popular in the modern Sunday School which had better be excised from the boy's répertoire. Not for any actual harm they may do, but because they are likely to give the boys' meeting a sort of a grave-yardy tinge and suggest to him that religion is a very melancholy thing. We may not all share President Wilson's aversion to "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere." But most of us will agree that "Oh to be nothing, nothing" is an unfit sentiment for a red-corpuscled boy, and that "Beyond the smiling and the weeping" is in a boys' assemblage one of those things that edifieth not.

The boys themselves may not balk at "Scattering smiles, sweet sunny smiles," or "Wear a smile for Jesus," or "Jesus wants me for a sunbeam." They will sing away for dear life as bidden. But suddenly some day the absurdity will dawn upon them; the hymn will strike them as rot and nonsense; there will be a rude awakening. And they will hotly rebel, as if their mother

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should essay to wash their face or a sister to curl their hair. They will thereupon scorn and defy a religion whose hymns are such silly, sissy, soft and sickly things.

"Fight the good fight with all your might" carries with it a quite different suggestion. The boys will remember that long and hum it over in a time when they need it most. "Stand up for Jesus" is just as good and inspiriting. "Have courage, my boy, to say no" they will declare to be all right. And there's many another hymn that tells of warfare and valor and spiritual fighting. Some of the best have almost gone out of fashion. "Dare to be a Daniel" is hardly known to the modern boy. "Yield not to temptation" happily lives on. Of neither is the music of a very high type. We are not considering high types of music. We are briefly discussing what the boys like and will sing heartily and what may have a really wholesome effect upon their developing life.

The boy is not much of a sentimentalist. And yet mother songs, even those of the very weepy variety, are likely to appeal to

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the boy. It is better to steer clear of these. They may be tolerated once in awhile, like a rich and indigestible dessert. Too much of them is not good for the boy.

You will do well to edit your meeting leader's announcements. Otherwise, "Where is my wandering boy to-night?" may be sung fifty-two times a year, and "Lead, Kindly Light"—one of the most unsingable and yet most popular songs—will figure conspicuously; and "Nearer, my God, to Thee" and "Rock of Ages" will be droned and dragged more incessantly than their rather unboyish sentiment will justify.

In a group of boys of my acquaintance once on a time a popular base ball player died. For his memorial service I dug out from the hymn book that very touching and beautiful hymn known as "The Christian's Good-night." It has eight stanzas to it; or ten there may be. The boys caught on to it readily and sang it with spirit and understanding.

But thereupon every meeting became a memorial service. Every leader turned to this hymn first. The whole eight stanzas—

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or are there ten?—were sung over and over again. I tried in vain to switch the leaders off to some sturdier theme. My switching was inefficient. I must adopt more drastic measures. The only cure was to get rid of the hymn book. Which was both expensive and calamitous. For many a day eager meeting leaders went thumbing their new hymnals, studying the table of contents, searching diligently and in vain, and appealing as a last resort to me to know "Where is the hymn that we sang at Bud's funeral?" It was not there. I had taken pains to prevent that. And with one accord they voted the new hymn book a delusion and a snare.

Mother songs are popular, both in a vaudeville show and in a Sunday School. But too much mothering is likely to turn into the maudlin. It lapses into sham and insincerity. It is not wholesome for a group of growing boys. It is the fighting songs that are best for them, and it is these they will sing the most heartily. Not songs about the joys of heaven, not death bed and cemetery songs, but songs of real heroism,

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martial in words and music, suggestive of daily and hourly combat, conflict, conquest.

It is better, of course, to let the boys have their own way in such matters so far as possible. If you bar out a vaudeville song you had better be sure of your reason. And if you substitute a strong, fighting, masculine hymn for one of the sickly sentimental type you had better tell why. You may do it in a few words that are likely to be entirely satisfying. "Let us sing this instead," you may suggest. "It's a man's song. The other is meant for girls"—or for kids, or for grandmothers. Your argument will be all sufficient. There will be enough said.

But with all this eagerness of singing, it would not be well to turn your lusty boys into a vested choir, singing nothing but angelic anthems, devoting itself to the strictly classical form. There is such a thing as going too far. And this would be altogether too far.

A certain number of your boys—or an uncertain number—will like this sort of thing. To them singing smooth part songs

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in the choir loft will be "nuts." To most of the others it will seem "nutty." The fittest may survive in your project of a church choir. The unfittest will slink away into outer darkness. Yet it is the unfit that you should be chiefly angling for. The majority should rule in such matters as in others. Your great noisy crowd will sing joyously together, shouting out their songs to the last man, with not one voice silent or a single vocal cord unused. But there is a lot of difference between singing popular songs round the piano, or militant hymns in a Sunday School class, and singing a Mozart mass in a choir gallery. From the standpoint of art the Mozart mass may be a vast success. But as regards the welfare of the mob of boys whom you are seeking to lead onward and upward it may be a prodigious failure. For by the time you are ready for a public performance most of the boys that you sought and ought to reach will have gone where the woodbine twineth. For the delicate nuances of a Mozart they have no use. But they can and will sing "Pull for the shore" to beat the band.

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CHAPTER XIII

JOINING THE CHURCH

UPON the difficult theme of church membership I have not touched. Difficult, not because it is hard to bring boys of this sort into alliance with the church; but difficult because there is sometimes so little apparent connection between a boy's church membership and his moral life. It is a pitiful fact, but it might as well be bravely faced. Excuse me from the baleful task of selecting from a random group the boy who is churched and him who is unchurched. The boy who swears profusely, who is irreverent, disobedient, dishonorable, may prove to be a duly enrolled member of some church or other, and to be rather proud of it. His meeker, gentler, evidently blameless comrade is perhaps no church member at all.

Too much emphasis is laid upon mere church joining. A boy's union with the

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church has too often been regarded as the climax of his spiritual warfare. After his first communion he is mostly disregarded. He promptly outgrows the Sunday School. The young people's society makes no successful and united—even no unsuccessful—overtures in his direction. He is allowed to shift for himself, with the church's benediction upon him. And when the parson in conference a few months later is enumerating the fruits of his labors and emphasizing the large number of new recruits for the Master's work, the boy may be revelling and rioting, with never a thought of a church vow and utterly unconcerned as to church loyalty.

Precisely what was in the mind of the good man who first invented young people's societies I hardly know. But if I were to invent them over again I think my desire would be mainly toward those who had lately taken their vows before the whole congregation, and my concern be for the boys and girls who had just enrolled themselves as church members.

Surely the need of these at this very

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critical time is great. Just what the average church does for their culture and admonition is not easily apparent. Here's a church that invites them round for a scanty snack of ice cream and a maccaroon or two. It believes thereupon it has done its pious duty and has welcomed them with all proper hospitality into a fatherly fold. How many of them, and how ardently, are invited into the young people's society I won't attempt to guess. Evidently there are few of them that enter or remain.

In towns of my acquaintance it is not unusual for churches to admit classes of sixty or eighty or one hundred young people every Easter. If all of these were taken into the young people's societies, those societies would soon be holding overflow meetings, pulling down their ecclesiastical barns to build greater. Yet if you drop into one of these meetings soon after the Easter harvest of souls you will see scarcely half a dozen of the new girl church members, and I fear not more than one or two of the boys, who bravely took their stand for Christ and his cause, according to all

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the ceremonial rites of the church, a few weeks before.

THE CHURCH BOY'S NEED

Plainly for these young converts, who may be reckoned as "church boys," quite as much as for the unchurched sort, an evening meeting is needed. And for them quite as much as for others there needs to be the solidarity of an enthusiastic Sunday School class, conducted along unusual lines, with a big-boyish spirit of brotherhood as its most emphatic phase.

Few churches maintain a thriving men's meeting as a weekly feature. The causes for this may be various. Some of the causes are largely domestic. The man has a wife and a family. He prefers to go to meeting with them—if he goes at all. In the case of young unmarried men or big boys there is no such barrier or excuse. A meeting composed of this sort is far more feasible. It is very rarely tried. The young people's society is barren of this type. They are too old for the junior society. There is nothing in between. Which is a pity. For they

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would come if they were asked. And if there was a herd of them, running things themselves, they might readily make and create and establish and continue the livest meeting of the whole half-dead church.

And so with their Sunday School class. This is a day of large classes for men. Every well regulated church tries to have one. The men number dozens and scores, sometimes even hundreds. Meanwhile in the same Sunday School there are little groups of scattered boys, six here, eight there and two or three yonder. Why not try herding them? What is good for the middle-aged men or the young men may prove to be just about as good for the big boy or the middle-sized boy. A big class of unchurched boys may be the making of a church full of men. And if the work be done carefully and prayerfully, and with due regard for the solidarity of the crowd and the spirit of the gang, there may be built up a men's church of whose increase there shall be no end.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE BOYS' MAN

A PROGRESSIVE and thoroughly equipped city church could well afford to have upon its staff a boys' pastor. In highly organized churches nowadays there may be two or three assistant pastors. There are nurses and deaconesses and what not. The invalids are tenderly cared for. The babies are crêched and cradled. There is much doing among the little children. The kindergarten is paramount. The country week is emphasized. The mothers' meeting is played up. There are smokers for the men. There are picnics for the old folks.

Between the little boys and the grown men there is a great gulf fixed. And even the highly organized and elaborately equipped church does little to bridge this gulf. A boy's pastor would serve as an excellent bridge. His work might well begin with

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the boys of thirteen and continue into their young manhood. And if he was the right sort he might find enough to keep him busy seven days of the week. From dawn till dewy eve? Nay, till on past midnight.

The right man might do a very aggressive and successsful work. It would be a profitable work. He would earn his salary several times over; and he would relieve other of the parish workers of a good deal of futile anxiety and profitless trouble.

The pastor in chief—which is usually the only pastor—has quite too many things to do to allow for much study of the growing boys. Even if he be entirely well intentioned and decidedly tactful, yet with his great round of duties there is little opportunity for him to project and carry out and complete a well rounded boys' work. The pastor of a large parish—or of a parish that might be greatly enlarged and for whose enlargement he constantly longs—might do very substantial work in shepherding the growing boys if there were not so many sermons to be written and sick beds to visit and funerals to be conducted and a

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thousand and one other interruptions and interferences.

He may desire an assistant. Frequently he desires in vain. But when the opportunity for an assistant comes along, what better than a real boys' man for his aid, a man who will know the boys of the church intimately, who will understand their habits and their ways, who will fathom their companionships and become acquainted with their gangs, who will add other boys unto them and will enter into the spirit of their work and play; who will know what they are up to when evening comes, who will understand their haunts and their habits, and who will seek to substitute for their commonplace ideals something higher and better.

A young assistant pastor who has time and inclination for it, and who will enter heartily into this sort of work, ought to be worth to a church far more than he will ever ask to be paid. If he shall be to the boys a guide, philosopher and friend, their sympathizer, their comrade; if they not only respect but like him, and if they recognize

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him as their crony, who belongs to them and exists for them, his position will be a highly honorable and important one. And even the doubters and the grumblers, who may scowl rebelliously at this additional drain upon their pocketbooks, may come to regard him with tolerant favor as a thing practically indispensable.

But this boys' pastor, I take it, like other boy workers who seek to tackle the mass and to gather the crowds and to fascinate a more or less numerous multitude, will study the boys' likes before seeking to foist upon them some highly recommended scheme of diversion. If he be, for instance, an enthusiastic naturalist he will not in his enthusiasm imagine that all his host will follow after him in his quest of curious rocks and unusual birds. He will indeed try to fire his comrades with his own zeal, and he will in a measure succeed. He will rouse the stolid and stimulate the inert and open the dull eyes and inflame the smoldering soul.

But it is not likely that a crowd of fifty or one hundred Sunday School boys will

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become ardent naturalists just because their leader is one. Their tastes will widely diverge. Some of them will follow their naturalist pastor to the ends of the earth in the quest for a rare fern or a curious caterpillar. To others, "a primrose by the river's brim" will remain only a yellow primrose, despite all the enthusiasm of the pastor's leadership. And they will yawn presently, and lag and dawdle then, and wander off at length, when the enthusiast's back is turned, to take a swim or bat flies or "start something."

Now it is for the greatest good of the greatest number that the boys' man must labor. He must study his material and find out what they like best. If they all pine to be Scouts, and if his experience with them shows that they are in earnest in their scouting proclivities, he will err greatly in disregarding their taste and imposing some program of his own. But if their tastes run in other channels, if he finds their likes are of a different sort, it is not only fair to cater to those likes, but logical and necessary. We must bear in mind not merely

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what we think is good for the boy, or what a boy or two or half a dozen of them may like, or what all of them ought to like, but the thing that the majority of them actually do like and will continue to like. If they like molasses candy, we may have a hard time of it convincing them that oatmeal is better.

To give the boys what they want is the very best way to lead them up to what they ought to want. To entice them by means which seem dull and prosy to them at the outset, in the hope that presently the dull and prosy things may seem to them splendid and romantic, is not always the method that will finally and completely fetch them.

We must begin by giving them what they really like. Very especially if we are dealing, as is assumed throughout, with the mob; not with an individual or a little group of individuals. For here is the point: Boys like to do what other boys do. If the majority of the boys like this thing or that, practically all the boys will soon be keen for it. If the likers are a very little minority, it is going to be hard to bring the

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great group into the minority's way of seeing things.

The boys' pastor of the future, who has been trained in the seminary expressly for this form of church work—who has toiled in boys' clubs and settlements and playgrounds in between his classes in Hebrew and his lectures on homiletics—will understand all this. He won't expect to find the boys responding to his passion for Renaissance architecture, just because that's his chief hobby, or revelling in Keats' poetry, because of his own enthusiasm therefor. The boys' pastor will fit his tastes to the boys' tastes, and banish his pet ideas and favorite theories if they don't gibe with the boys' notions.

And thus will the clerical shepherd of boys and the lay fisher of boys strike hands and be as brothers.

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CHAPTER XV

A BOY'S WAY

HAVING arrived at chapter XV and last, I would remind you of my text in chapter first, "Boys will be boys." Don't try to make of them anything else; neither grandmothers nor angels nor saints nor prigs.

They are and ought to gradually develop into men. But it should be by boyish processes. And they will be a better type of men with the church's aid and through strong masculine means. I have here discountenanced alluring bribes. I have discredited specious attractions. I have little faith in the ice cream method and all it signifies. But I have abounding confidence in the influence of the crowd. It is the boy's gang that is to save the boy. And reciprocally the boy is to save his gang.

I well remember a brisk and bustling body who years ago related, with a fairly dizzying glibness, his magnificent program

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of attractions. He had organized a lot of boys, with the worthiest of intentions. But, he explained, he could not "hold" these boys save by keeping something going all the while. A highly proper principle in itself; but this is the way he had worked it out:

There was to be a poverty social on Friday, the 15th. On Tuesday, the 19th, they were to have a grab bag soirée. The following Thursday there was to be a chestnut hunt. The oyster supper came the following Monday. There was to be a "grand musicale" three days later. And for the following week he had projected a snipping party, a cob-web social and a Martha Washington fête. He had other things in store for the succeeding weeks; but he was not bothering much about them just now.

Which was well. His organization had collapsed before the subsequent weeks arrived. There was not enough doing evidently for these hungry and thirsty boys of his.

Now, boys will be boys. But they will be very restless, fickle, dissatisfied boys if

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this is the way they are to be "held." It is a good deal better to hold them by means normal and continuous. It is a good deal better, indeed, for them to hold each other; bricks in a wall welded closely together; links in a chain, each playing its highly important part; stones in an archway, with collapse inevitable if one should break loose. Each dependent on the rest, all joined in one, making their own heaven, creating their own atmosphere; an atmosphere of boydom; essentially a natural, hearty, noisy, juvenile atmosphere.

A gang that is held together for a month or six is a poor sort of a gang. A gang that holds together with growing strength and increased stability and greater cohesiveness for half a dozen years is much more to my liking and much more practical. It is thus that the boys' work of a church grows on into men's work. If the boys' work collapses when they reach "a certain age"—as the tiresomely familiar phrase has it—it is a pretty weak work; hardly worth the effort.

There must be things for these boys to

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do, and these things must be real tasks. I would not discourage the good Sunday School folk who, seeking to "hold the boys," ingeniously set them collecting lesson papers, or instal them as assistant librarians, or lure them into a niche in the choir, or persuade them to become church ushers. As makeshifts these gentle tasks may serve a useful purpose. But to the youth burning with zeal to help the world along; to play a man's part in it; to do a man's work and to leave his mark upon it, the little stunt of "proceshing" up the aisle every Sunday with a basket full of coin, or of tarrying after the Sunday School service to gather up the hymn books, seems like a very small and unimportant thing.

Promptly I am reminded that it is the small things that count, and that the things that are next to us, rather than the things in the antipodes, are the things we should all stand ready to do. But I think of the wistful young girl who came to Jane Addams wanting to do something vital and real. Miss Addams sent her to her pastor; and he bade her arrange the flowers in the

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chancel. A beautiful work, perhaps, but entirely unsatisfying to this highly aspiring maiden who longed for the real thing.

And there is much that is waiting for big boys and young men to do other than gathering loose lesson leaves. The real boy has little zest for just puttering. The church ought to put him diligently to work. It is a sorry reflection upon the church's narrow ideal of its young men's usefulness that it gives them so precious little to do, and that it seeks to "hold" them by such paltry and puny processes.

When Tony Biddle went to his rector seeking a sphere for his suddenly acquired zeal, Dr. Tompkins happily did not bid him keep the chancel fresh with flowers. He set him at once upon the beginnings of a wonderful work which has now reached so many thousands of men that I would not attempt to name the number here. For there will be new thousands and more week after next.

When young Dr. Grenfell sought out his rector back in England with a like yearning, he was practically turned out. He

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sought to do a work for boys—with boxing gloves as a spiritual adjunct—under the church's wing. But his ideas were too secular, the rector told him—a conventional rector who wanted his conventional flock to walk in conventional ways. That was the beginning of the unconventional young nobleman's career. His Labrador work may be shockingly secular to some of those immersed in rubrics and clad in chasubles. But there is in it more of the spirit of the Master than in a thousand churches that might be easily—if perhaps not quite politely—enumerated.

Let it not be supposed that in my zeal for catching and interesting and holding the boys I underestimate the power of the Gospel, the benefit of Bible study, and the need of a real growth in grace. Where I differ from many others, perhaps, may be in my thought that these things should come gradually. The boy and the Bible ought to be hearty companions. But the companionship ought to be a development. It is the Old Testament heroes, told about in modern phrase, that will first attract the

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boy to the best of books. The New Testament heroes come along later. The early Christian martyrs, animated by the spirit of that wonderful book, will thrill him to new hero worship. The martyrs of the Roman amphitheatre, the sufferers for conscience' sake, the vigils and prayers of the catacombs will rouse him to eager admiration. The stories of Livingstone and Paton and Chinese Gordon; of Pitkin, slain by the Boxers; of Hedley Vicars, witnessing for Christ in the misery of the Crimean war, will start him longing for a like career and dreaming of courageous deeds of his very own—with the same eternal ideal, for the same Hero's sake.

But to set these unlearned boys at the task of reading the Bible through, or even reading the New Testament through, is like putting the cart before the horse. The ambitious boy may start out bravely enough with the first chapter of Matthew. He will wade through genealogies cheerfully, and will find much to interest him in the first three Gospels. In the fourth he may discern and deplore a lack of action. But he

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will recover himself when he gets into the midst of the fifth book, with its shipwrecks and its prison scenes and its constant recurrence of individual heroism.

When he reaches Romans he will begin to flounder. If he pursues his steadfast way even into Galatians, be a little easy on that plodding boy, who means well but reads badly. Deal gently with him, and don't condemn him utterly, as an impenitent backslider, an unpardonable sinner, a horrible example of total depravity, if in a muddle of Pauline theology he casts the book aside and stops short, never to go again, like a good old-fashioned grandfather's clock.

Don't expect too much at the outset. Begin gradually, and work up to a climax. Let it not be too lofty a climax, either. Boyhood is but human. It is because the teachers of boyhood forget this and ignore it that so many boys fail to get caught and fishing is often so bad. The fish are there and they are mostly in a biting mood. But with stupid fishermen the catch is small; the nets come in empty; there is much toil-

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ing all night, with precious little to show for it.

But fish travel in schools. When there is a catch it is a catch indeed. The nets break and the fishermen must cry for help. It must be swift, earnest, intelligent help, or all will be lost.

Boys cling together no less clannishly than the fish of the sea. They can best be landed in shoals. And when the church's laymen seek to get them thus—the boy and his gang, the gang through the boy—there will be a new note in the church's work and a new activity in the ecclesiastical aquarium.

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